FRANK ON THE PRAIRIE

BY

HARRY CASTLEMON

FRANK AND ARCHIE SERIES.

FRANK

ON THE PRAIRIE

BY

HARRY CASTLEMON,

AUTHOR OF "THE ROCKY MOUNTAIN SERIES," "THE GO-AHEAD SERIES," ETC.

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Contents.

CHAPTER I. PAGE

Ho for the West 9

CHAPTER II.

The Wagon Train 18

CHAPTER III.

Antelope Hunting 29

CHAPTER IV.

The Best Trapper on the Prairie 37

CHAPTER V.

A Fight with the Indians 56

CHAPTER VI.

Lost on the Prairie 73

CHAPTER VII.

The Trapper's Reminiscence 85

CHAPTER VIII.

The "Ole Bar's Hole" 103

CHAPTER IX.

Archie's Adventure with a Grizzly 114

CHAPTER X. PAGE

HANGING A BEAR..... 124

CHAPTER XI.

A BUFFALO HUNT..... 134

CHAPTER XII.

A NIGHT AMONG THE WOLVES..... 147

CHAPTER XIII.

FRANK'S NEW ACQUAINTANCES..... 157

CHAPTER XIV.

THE TRADER'S EXPEDITION..... 171

CHAPTER XV.

THE OUTLAW'S ESCAPE..... 183

CHAPTER XVI.

THE KING OF THE DROVE..... 198

CHAPTER XVII.

HOW THE TRAPPER GOT HIS HORSE..... 209

CHAPTER XVIII

OLD BOB'S ADVENTURE..... 222

CHAPTER XIX.

HOMEWARD BOUND..... 237

FRANK ON THE PRAIRIE.

CHAPTER I.

Go for the West!

FOR two months after their return from their hunting expedition in "the woods," Frank and Archie talked of nothing but the incidents that had transpired during their visit at the trapper's cabin. The particulars of Frank's desperate fight with the moose had become known throughout the village, and the "Young Naturalist" enjoyed an enviable reputation as a hunter. He was obliged to relate his adventures over and over again, until one day his thoughts and conversation were turned into a new channel by the arrival of an uncle, who had just returned from California.

Uncle James had been absent from home nearly ten years, and during most of that time had lived in the mines. Although the boys had not seen him since they were six years old, and of course could not remember him, they were soon on the best of terms with each other. Uncle James had an inexhaustible fund of stories; he had crossed the plains, fought the Indians, was accustomed to scenes of danger and excitement, and had such an easy way of telling his adventures, that the boys never grew tired of listening to them. The day after his arrival he visited the museum, gazed in genuine wonder at the numerous specimens of his nephews' handiwork, and listened to the descriptions of their hunting expeditions with as much interest as though he had been a boy himself. Then he engaged in hunting with them, and entered into the sport with all the reckless eagerness of youth.

The winter was passed in this way, and when spring returned, Uncle James began to talk of returning to California to settle up his business. He had become attached to life in the mines, but could not bear the thought of leaving his relatives again. The quiet comforts he had enjoyed

at the cottage he thought were better than the rough life and hard fare to which he had been accustomed for the last ten years. He had left his business, however, in an unsettled state, and, as soon as he could "close it up," would return and take up his abode in Lawrence. The cousins regretted that the parting time was so near, for they looked upon their relative as the very pattern of an uncle, but consoled themselves by looking forward to the coming winter, when he would be settled as a permanent inmate of the cottage.

"I say, Frank," exclaimed Archie one day, as he burst into the study, where his cousin was engaged in cleaning his gun preparatory to a musk-rat hunt, "there 's something in the wind. Just now, as I came through the sitting-room, I surprised our folks and Uncle James talking very earnestly about something. But they stopped as soon as I came in, and, as that was a gentle hint that they did n't want me to know any thing about it, I came out. There 's something up, I tell you."

"It 's about uncle's business, I suppose," replied Frank. But if that *was* the subject of the

conversation, Archie came to the conclusion that his affairs must be in a very unsettled state, for when they returned from their hunt that night the same mysterious conversation was going on again. It ceased, however, as the boys entered the room, which made Archie more firm in his belief than ever that there was "something up."

The next morning, at the breakfast-table, Archie's father announced his intention of returning to Portland at once, as his business needed his attention; and, turning to the boys, inquired:

"Well, have you had hunting enough this winter to satisfy you?"

"Yes, sir," was the answer.

"Then I suppose you don't want to go across the plains with your Uncle James?"

"Hurrah!" shouted Archie, springing to his feet, and upsetting his coffee-cup. "Did you say we might go?"

"Be a little more careful, Archie," said his father. "No, I did not say so."

"Well, it amounts to the same thing," thought Archie, "for father never would have said a word about it if he wasn't intending to let us go. I knew there was something up."

We need not stop to repeat the conversation that followed. Suffice it to say, that Uncle James, having fully made up his mind to return to the village as soon as he could settle up his business, had asked permission for his nephews to accompany him across the plains. Their parents, thinking of the fight with the moose, and knowing the reckless spirit of the boys, had at first objected. But Uncle James, promising to keep a watchful eye on them, had, after considerable argument, carried the day, and it was finally decided that the boys could go.

"But remember," said Mr. Winters, "you are to be governed entirely by Uncle James; for, if you have no one to take care of you, you will be in more fights with bears and panthers."

The boys readily promised obedience, and, hardly waiting to finish their breakfast, went into the study to talk over their plans.

"Did n't I tell you there was something up?" said Archie, as soon as they had closed the door "We 'll have a hunt now that will throw all our former hunting expeditions in the shade."

As soon as their excitement had somewhat abated, they remembered that Dick Lewis, the

trapper, had told them that it was his intention to start for the prairie in the spring. If he had not already gone, would it not be a good plan to secure his company? He knew all about the prairie, and might be of service to them. They laid the matter before Uncle James, who, without hesitation, pronounced it an excellent idea. "For," said he, "we are in no hurry. Instead of going by stage, we will buy a wagon and a span of mules and take our time. If we don't happen to fall in with a train, we shall, no doubt, want a guide." As soon, therefore, as the ice had left the creek so that it could be traveled with a boat, Uncle James accompanied the boys to the trapper's cabin.

Dick met them at the door, and greeted them with a grasp so hearty, that they all felt its effects for a quarter of an hour afterward.

"I ain't gone yet," said he; "but it won't be long afore I see the prairy onct more."

"Well, Dick," said Frank, "we 're going, too, and want you to go with us."

The trapper and his brother opened their eyes wide with astonishment, but Uncle James explained, and ended by offering to pay the trapper's ex-

penses if he would accompany them. After a few moments' consideration, he accepted the proposition, saying:

"I have tuk to the youngsters mightily. They're gritty fellers, an' I should like to show 'em a bit of prairy life."

Uncle James and the boys remained at the cabin nearly a week, during which their plans were all determined upon, and, when they arrived at home, they at once commenced preparations for their journey. Their double-barreled shot-guns were oiled, and put carefully away. They were very efficient weapons among small game, but Uncle James said they were not in the habit of using "pop-guns" on the prairie; they would purchase their fire-arms and other necessary weapons at St. Louis.

The first of June—the time set for the start—at length arrived, and with it came the trapper, accompanied by his dog. Dick carried his long rifle on his shoulder, his powder-horn and bullet-pouch at his side, and a knapsack, containing a change of clothes and other necessary articles, at his back. He had evidently bestowed more than usual care upon his toilet; his suit of buckskin

was entirely new, and even his rifle seemed to have received a thorough rubbing and cleaning preparatory to its introduction into civilized life. Frank and Archie meeting him at the door, relieved him of his rifle and pack, and conducted him into the house. But here the trapper was sadly out of place. He sat on the edge of his chair, and was constantly changing the position of his feet, and looking down at the rich carpet, as if he could hardly believe that it was made to walk upon. The inmates of the cottage used every exertion in their power to make him feel at his ease, and, to some extent, succeeded; but he breathed much more freely when the farewells had been said, and the party was on its way to the wharf. In due time they arrived at Portland, where they remained nearly a week. Here the trapper again found himself in hot water. He was installed in a large, airy room in Mr. Winter's elegant residence; but he would much rather have been assigned quarters among the trees in the yard. The sights and sounds of the city were new to him, and at every corner he found something to wonder at. When on the street, he was continually getting in somebody's way, or being separated from

his companions, who found it necessary to keep a vigilant watch over him. But it was on the train that his astonishment reached its height. He had never before traveled in the cars, and, as they thundered away, going faster and faster as they left the city behind, the trapper began to clutch his seat, and to look wistfully out the window at the woods, which appeared to be dancing by, as if he never expected to be permitted to enter his natural element again. He would have preferred to "foot it," as he remarked, and, when at last they reached St. Joseph, he drew a long breath of relief, mentally resolving that he would never again tempt destruction by traveling either on a steamboat or railroad car.

It was midnight when they reached the hotel. Being very much fatigued with their long journey, they at once secured rooms and retired, and were soon fast asleep.

CHAPTER II.

The Wagon Train.

N awaking the next morning, the boys found themselves surrounded by new scenes. While they were dressing, they looked out at the window, and obtained their first view of a wagon train, which was just starting out for the prairie. The wagons were protected by canvas covers, some drawn by oxen, others by mules, and the entire train being accompanied by men both on foot and on horseback. Fat, sleek cows followed meekly after the wagons, from behind whose covering peeped the faces of women and children—the families of the hardy pioneers now on their way to find new homes amid the solitude of that western region.

The boys watched the train until it disappeared, and then went down stairs to get their breakfast.

Uncle James was not to be found. In fact, ever since leaving Portland, he seemed to have forgotten his promise to his brother, for he never bothered his head about his nephews. It is true, he had watched them rather closely at the beginning of the journey, but soon discovered that they were fully capable of taking care of themselves and the trapper besides. He did not make his appearance until nearly two hours after the boys had finished their breakfast, and then he rode up to the hotel mounted on a large, raw-boned, ugly-looking horse. He was followed by the trapper, who was seated in a covered wagon, drawn by a span of mules, while behind the wagon were two more horses, saddled and bridled.

"Now, then, boys," said Uncle James, as he dismounted and tied his horse to a post, "where 's your baggage? We 're going with that train that went out this morning."

"An' here, youngsters," exclaimed Dick, as he climbed down out of his wagon, "come an' take your pick of these two hosses. This one," he continued, pointing to a small, gray horse, which stood impatiently pawing the ground and tossing his head—"this feller is young and foolish yet. He

don't know nothin' 'bout the prairy or buffalo huntin'; an' if whoever gets him should undertake to shoot a rifle while on his back, he would land him on the ground quicker nor lightnin'. I 'spect I shall have to larn him a few lessons. But this one"—laying his hand on the other horse, which stood with his head down and his eyes closed, as if almost asleep—"he 's an ole buffaler hunter. The feller that your uncle bought him of has jest come in from the mountains. He can travel wusser nor a steamboat if you want him to, an' you can leave him on the prairy any whar an' find him when you come back. Now, youngster," he added, turning to Frank, "which 'll you have?"

"I have no choice," replied Frank. "Which one do you want, Archie?"

"Well," replied the latter, "I 'd rather have the buffalo hunter. He looks as though he had n't spirit enough to throw a fellow off, but that gray looks rather vicious."

"Wal, then, that 's settled," said the trapper; "so fetch on your plunder, an' let 's be movin' to onct."

Their baggage, which consisted of three trunks—small, handy affairs, capable of holding a consider-

able quantity of clothing, but not requiring much space—was stowed away in the wagon. When Uncle James had paid their bill at the hotel, they mounted their horses, and the trapper, who now began to feel more at home, took his seat in the wagon, and drove after the train. Archie soon began to think that he had shown considerable judgment in the selection of his horse, for they had not gone far before the gray began to show his temper. After making several attempts to turn his head toward home—a proceeding which Frank successfully resisted—he began to dance from one side of the street to the other, and ended by endeavoring to throw his rider over his head; but the huge Spanish saddle, with its high front and back, afforded him a secure seat; and after receiving a few sharp thrusts from Frank's spurs, the gray quietly took his place by the side of Archie's horse, and walked along as orderly and gentle as could be wished.

The trapper, who was now the chief man of the party, had superintended the buying of their outfit, and, although it was a simple one, they were still well provided with every necessary article. The boys were dressed in complete suits of blue jeans,

an article that will resist wear and dirt to the last extremity, broad-brimmed hats, and heavy horseman's boots, the heels of which were armed with spurs.

Their weapons, which were stowed away in the wagon, consisted of a brace of revolvers and a hunting-knife each, and Archie owned a short breech-loading rifle, while Frank had purchased a common "patch" rifle. The wagon also contained provisions in abundance—coffee, corn meal, bacon, and the like—and ammunition for their weapons. Their appearance would have created quite a commotion in the quiet little village of Lawrence, but in St. Joseph such sights were by no means uncommon. Buckskin was much more plenty than broadcloth, and the people who passed them on the streets scarcely noticed them.

At length, just before dark, they overtook the train, which had stopped for the night. The wagons were drawn up on each side of the road, and altogether the camp presented a scene that was a pleasant one to men wearied with their day's journey. Cattle were feeding quietly near the wagons, chickens cackled joyously from their coops, men and women were busily engaged with

their preparations for supper, while groups of noisy children rolled about on the grass, filling the camp with the sounds of their merry laughter.

The trapper drove on until he found a spot suitable for their camp, and then turned off the road and stopped. He at once began to unharness the mules, while the boys, after removing their saddles, fastened their horses to the wagon with a long rope, and allowed them to graze. When the trapper had taken care of his mules, he started a fire, and soon a coffee-pot was simmering and sputtering over the flames, and several slices of bacon were broiling on the coals. After supper, the boys spread their blankets out under the wagon, and, being weary with their day's ride (for it was something new to them), soon fell asleep.

The next morning, when they awoke it was just daylight. After drawing on their boots, they crawled out from under the wagon, and found the trapper, standing with his hat off, and his long arms extended as if about to embrace some invisible object.

"I tell you what, youngsters," said he, as the boys approached; "if this aint nat'ral; jest take a sniff of that ar fresh air! Here," he contin-

ued, looking about him with a smile of satisfaction—"here, I know all 'bout things. I 'm to hum now. Thar 's nothin' on the prairy that Dick Lewis can 't 'count fur. But, youngsters, I would n't travel on them ar steamboats an' railroads ag'in fur all the beaver in the Missouri River. Every thing in them big cities seemed to say to me, 'Dick, you haint got no business here.' Them black walls an' stone roads; them rumblin' carts an' big stores, war sights I never seed afore, an' I never want to see 'em ag'in. I know I was treated mighty kind, an' all that; but it could n't make me feel right. I did n't like them streets, windin' an' twistin' about, an' allers loosin' a feller; an' I was n't to hum. But *now*, youngsters, I know what I 'm doin'. Nobody can 't lose Dick Lewis on the prairy. I know the names of all the streets here; an', 'sides, I know whar they all lead to. An' as fur varmints, thar 's none of 'em that I haint trapped an' fit. An' Injuns! I know a leetle 'bout them, I reckon. It 's funny that them ar city chaps do n't know nothin' 'bout what 's goin' on out here; an' it shows that all the larnin' in the world aint got out o' books. Send one of 'em here, an' I could show him a thing or two he

never heern tell on. But I must be gettin' breakfast, 'cause we 'll be off ag'in soon; an' on the prairy every feller has to look out fur himself. You can 't pull a ring in the wall here, an' have a chap with white huntin' shirt an' morocker moccasins on come up an' say: 'Did you ring, sir?' An' how them ar fellers knowed which room to come to in them big hotels, is something I can 't get through my head. Thar 's no big bell to call a feller to grub here. Take one of them city chaps an' give him a rifle, an' pint out over the prairy an' tell him to go an' hunt up his breakfast, an' how would he come out? Could he travel by the sun, or tell the pints of the compass by the stars? Could he lasso an' ride a wild mustang, or shoot a Injun plumb atween the eyes at two hundred an' fifty yards? No! I reckon not! Wal, thar 's a neap o' things I could n't do; an' it shows that every man had oughter stick to his own business. It 's all owin' to a man's bringin' up."

While the trapper spoke he had been raking together the fire that had nearly gone out; and having got it fairly started, he began the work of getting breakfast. The boys, after rolling up their blankets and packing them away in the wagon

amused themselves in watching the movements of the emigrants, who now began their preparations for their day's journey. By the time Uncle James awoke, the trapper pronounced their breakfast ready. After they had done ample justice to the homely meal (and it was astonishing what an appetite the fresh invigorating air of the prairie gave them), the boys packed the cooking utensils away in the wagon while the trapper began to harness the mules. This was an undertaking that a less experienced man would have found to be extremely hazardous, for the animals persisted in keeping their heels toward him, and it was only by skillful maneuvering that Dick succeeded in getting them hitched to the wagon. By the time this was accomplished, Uncle James and the boys had saddled their horses and followed the trapper, who drove off as though he perfectly understood what he was about, leaving the train to follow at its leisure.

Dick acted as if he had again found himself among friends from whom he had long been separated; but it was evident that sorrow was mingled with his joy, for on every side his eye rested on the improvements of civilization. The road was lined with fine, well-stocked farms, and the prairie

over which his father had hunted the buffalo and fought the Indian, had been turned up by the plow, and would soon be covered with waving crops. No doubt the trapper's thoughts wandered into the future, for, as the boys rode up beside the wagon, he said, with something like a sigh:

"Things aint as they used to be, youngsters. I can 'member the time when thar was 'nt a fence within miles of here, an' a feller could go out an' knock over a buffaler fur breakfast jest as easy as that farmer over thar could find one of his sheep. But the ax an' plow have made bad work with a fine country, the buffaler an' Injun have been pushed back t'wards the mountains, an' it won't be long afore thar 'll be no room fur sich as me; an' we won't be missed neither, 'cause when the buffaler an' beaver are gone thar 'll be nothin' fur us to do. These farms will keep pushin' out all the while; an' when folks, sittin' in their snug houses beside their warm fires, hear tell of the Injuns that onst owned this country, nobody will ever think that sich fellers as me an' Bill Lawson an' ole Bob Kelly ever lived. If ole Bill was here now, he would say: 'Let 's go back to the mountains, Dick, an' stay thar.' He would n't like to see his

ole huntin' grounds wasted in this way, an' I do n't want to see it neither. But I know that the Rocky Mountains an' grizzly bars will last as long as I shall, an' thar 'll be no need of trappers an' hunters an' guides arter that."

Dick became silent after this, and it was not until the train halted for the noon's rest, that he recovered his usual spirits.

CHAPTER III.

Antelope Hunting.

GRADUALLY the train left the improvements of civilization behind, and, at the end of three weeks, it was miles outside of a fence. Here the trapper was in his natural element. He felt, as he expressed, "like a young one jest out o' school," adding, that all he needed was "one glimpse of a Comanche or Cheyenne to make him feel perfectly nat'ral."

In accordance with the promise he had made Frank before leaving St. Joseph, he now took Pete (that was the name the latter had given his horse) under his especial charge; and every morning, at the first peep of day, the boys saw him galloping over the prairie, firing his rifle as fast as he could reload, as if in pursuit of an imaginary herd of

buffaloes. At first the spirited animal objected to this mode of treatment, and made the most desperate efforts to unseat his rider; but the trapper, who had broken more than one wild mustang, was perfectly at home on horseback, and, after a few exercises of this kind, Pete was turned over to his young master, with the assurance that he was ready to begin buffalo hunting. According to Frank's idea, the animal had improved considerably under the trapper's system of training, for he would hardly wait for his rider to be fairly in the saddle before he would start off at the top of his speed. The boys, who considered themselves fully able to do any thing that had ever been accomplished by any one else, having seen Dick load and fire his rifle while riding at full speed, began to imitate his example, and in a short time learned the art to perfection. In addition to this, each boy looked upon his horse as the better animal, and the emigrants were witnesses to many a race between them, in which Sleepy Sam, as Archie called his horse, always came off winner. But Frank kept up the contest, and at every possible opportunity the horses were "matched," until they had learned their parts so well, that every time they found

themselves together, they would start off on a race without waiting for the word from their riders.

One morning, just after the train had left the camp, as the boys were riding beside the wagon, listening to a story the trapper was relating, the latter suddenly stopped, and, pointing toward a distant swell, said: "Do you see that ar', youngsters?"

The boys, after straining their eyes in vain, brought their field-glass into requisition, and finally discovered an object moving slowly along through the high grass; but the distance was so great, they could not determine what it was.

"That's a prong-horn," said the trapper at length. "An' now, Frank," he continued, "if you'll lend me that ar hoss, I'll show you that all the huntin' in the world aint larnt in that leetle patch of timber around Lawrence."

Frank at once dismounted, and Dick, after securing his rifle, sprung into the saddle, saying:

"Come along easy-like, youngsters, an' when I tell you, you get off an' hide behind your hoss."

Frank mounted Sleepy Sam behind Archie, and they followed the trapper, who led the way at an easy gallop. Useless, at his master's command,

remained with the wagon. They rode for a mile at a steady pace, and then, seeing that the game had discovered them, the boys, at a signal from the trapper, stopped and dismounted, while Dick kept on alone, his every movement closely watched by Frank and Archie, who, having often read of the skill required in hunting antelopes, were anxious to see how it was done. The trapper rode on for about half a mile further, and then the boys saw him dismount, unbuckle the bridle, and hobble his horse so that he would not stray away. He then threw himself on his hands and knees, and disappeared. A quarter of an hour afterward the boys saw his 'coon-skin cap waving above the grass. If this was intended to attract the attention of the game, it did not meet with immediate success, for the antelopes continued to feed leisurely up the swell, and finally some of their number disappeared behind it. The boys regarded this as conclusive evidence that the trapper's plan had failed; but at length one of the antelopes, which stood a little apart from the others, and appeared to be acting as sentinel, uttered a loud snort, which instantly brought every member of the herd to his side. They remained huddled together for several mo-

ments, as if in consultation, and then began to move slowly down the swell toward the place where the trapper was concealed. There were about twenty animals in the herd, and they came on in single file, stopping now and then to snuff the air and examine the object that had excited their curiosity. But nothing suspicious was to be seen, for the trapper was concealed in the grass, the only thing visible being his cap, which he gently waved to and fro as he watched the movements of the game. The antelopes advanced slowly—much *too* slowly for the impatient boys, who, concealed behind their horse, closely watched all their movements, fearful that they might detect the presence of the trapper, and seek safety in flight. But the latter well understood the matter in hand, and presently the boys saw a puff of smoke rise from the grass, and the nearest of the antelopes, springing into the air, fell dead in his tracks. The others turned and fled with the speed of the wind.

In an instant Frank and Archie had mounted and when they reached the place where the trapper was standing, he had secured his prize, which was one of the most graceful animals the boys had ever seen. It was about three and a half feet

high at the shoulders, and, although Dick pronounced it very fat, its body was slender and its limbs small and muscular. After having examined the animal to their satisfaction, they all mounted their horses, Dick carrying the game before him on his saddle; and as they rode toward the wagon, Archie exclaimed:

"Now, Frank, we know how to hunt antelopes. It isn't so very hard, after all."

"Is n't it?" inquired the trapper, with a laugh. "You do n't understand the natur of the critters, when you say that. I know I killed this one easy but a feller can't allers do it. Howsomever, you can try your hand the next time we meet any, an' if you do shoot one, I 'll allers call you my 'antelope killers.' Them red handkerchiefs of your'n would be jest the things to use, 'cause the critters can see it a long way. If you can bring one of 'em into camp, it will be something wuth braggin' on."

It was evident that the trapper did not entertain a very exalted opinion of the boys' "hunting qualities;" but that did not convince them that they could not shoot an antelope. On the contrary, it made them all the more anxious for an opportu

nity to try their skill on the game, if for no other reason than to show the trapper that he was mistaken.

Half an hour's riding brought them to the wagon, which was standing where they had left it, and, after the buck had been skinned and cleaned, the trapper mounted to his seat and drove after the train, followed by the boys, who strained their eyes in every direction in the hope of discovering another herd of antelopes. But nothing in the shape of a prong-horn was to be seen; and when the train resumed its journey after its noon halt, they gradually fell back until the wagons were out of sight behind the hills. Then, leaving the road, they galloped over the prairie until they reached the top of a high swell, when they stopped to look about them. About two miles to the left was the train slowly winding among the hills; but the most faithful use of their glass failed to reveal the wished-for game. All that afternoon they scoured the prairie on both sides of the wagons, and when it began to grow dark, they reluctantly turned their faces toward the camp.

"What did I tell you?" asked the trapper, as the boys rode up to the wagon, where the latter was

unharnessing the mules. "I said you could n't shoot a prong-horn."

"Of course we could n't," answered Archie, "for we did n't see any to shoot."

"I know that," replied the trapper with a grin; "but *I* seed plenty. The next time you go a huntin' prong-horns, be sartin that the wind blows from them t'wards you, an' not from you t'wards them. They 've got sharp noses, them critters have."

The boys were astonished. They had not thought of that; and Archie was compelled to acknowledge that "there was something in knowing how, after all."

CHAPTER IV.

The Best Trapper on the Prairie.

THAT night the train encamped a short distance from one of the stations of the Overland Stage Company. The trapper, as usual, after taking care of his mules, superintended the preparations for supper, while the boys, wearied with their day's ride, threw themselves on the grass near the wagon, and watched his movements with a hungry eye. Uncle James, as he had done almost every night since leaving St. Joseph, walked about the camp playing with the children, who began to regard him as an old acquaintance. Presently the attention of the boys was attracted by the approach of a stranger, whose long beard and thin hair—both as white as snow—bore evidence to the fact that he carried the burden of many years on his shoulders.

He was dressed in a complete suit of buckskin, which, although well worn, was nevertheless very neat, and, in spite of his years, his step was firm, and he walked as erect as an Indian. He carried a long heavy rifle on his shoulder, and from his belt peeped the head of a small hatchet of peculiar shape, and the buck-horn handle of a hunting-knife. He walked slowly through the camp, and when he came opposite the boys, Dick suddenly sprang from the ground where he had been seated, watching some steaks that were broiling on the coals, and, striding up to the stranger, laid his hand on his shoulder. The latter turned, and, after regarding him sharply for a moment, thrust out his hand, which the trapper seized and wrung in silence. For an instant they stood looking at each other without speaking, and then Dick took the old man by the arm and led him up to the fire, exclaiming:

"Bob Kelly, the oldest an' best trapper on the prairy!"

The boys arose as he approached, and regarded him with curiosity. They had heard their guide speak in the highest terms of "ole Bob Kelly," and had often wished to see the trapper whom Dick was willing to acknowledge as his superior. There

ne was—a mild, good-natured-looking old man, the exact opposite of what they had imagined him to be.

"Them are city chaps, Bob"—continued the trapper, as the old man, after gazing at the boys for a moment, seated himself on the ground beside the fire—"an' I 'm takin' 'em out to Californy. In course they are green consarnin' prairy life, but they are made of good stuff, an' are 'bout the keerlessest youngsters you ever see. What a doin' here, Bob?"

"Jest lookin' round," was the answer. "I 'm mighty glad to meet you ag'in, 'cause it looks nat'ral to see you 'bout. Things aint as they used to be. Me an' you are 'bout the oldest trappers agoin' now. The boys have gone one arter the other, an' thar 's only me an' you left that I knows on."

"What 's come on Jack Thomas?" asked Dick.

"We 're both without our chums now," answered the old man, sorrowfully. "Jack an' ole Bill Lawson are both gone, an' their scalps are in a Comanche wigwam."

The trapper made no reply, but went on with his preparations for supper in silence, and the boys

could see that he was considerably affected by the news he had just heard. His every movement was closely watched by his companion, who seemed delighted to meet his old acquaintance once more, and acted as though he did not wish to allow him out of his sight. There was evidently a good deal of honest affection between these two men. It did not take the form of words, but would have showed itself had one or the other of them been in danger. They did not speak again until Mr. Winters came up, when Dick again introduced his friend as the "oldest an' best trapper agoin'." Uncle James, who understood the customs of the trappers, simply bowed—a greeting which the old man returned with one short, searching glance, as if he meant to read his very thoughts.

"Now, then!" exclaimed Dick, "Grub's ready. Pitch in, Bob."

The old trapper was not in the habit of standing upon ceremony, and, drawing his huge knife from his belt, he helped himself to a generous piece of the meat, and, declining the corn-bread and the cup of coffee which the boys passed over to him, made his meal entirely of venison. After supper—there were but few dishes to wash now, for the

boys had learned to go on the principle that "fingers were made before forks"—the trapper hung what remained of the venison in the wagon, lighted his pipe, and stretched himself on the ground beside his companion.

The boys, knowing that the trappers would be certain to talk over the events that had transpired since their last meeting, spread their blankets where they could hear all that passed, and waited impatiently for them to begin; while Mr. Winters, who had by this time become acquainted with every man, woman, and child, in the train, started to pay a visit to the occupants of a neighboring wagon.

For some moments the two men smoked in silence, old Bob evidently occupied with his own thoughts, and Dick patiently waiting for him to speak. At length the old man asked:

"Goin' to Californy, Dick?"

The trapper replied in the affirmative.

"What a goin' to do arterward?"

"I'm a goin' to take to the mountains, an' stay thar," replied Dick. "I've seed the inside of a city, Bob; have rid on steam railroads an' boats as big as one of the Black Hills; an' now I'm satisfied to stay here. I'd a heap sooner face a grizzly

or a Injun than go back thar ag'in, 'cause I didn't feel to hum."

"Wal, I'm all alone now, Dick," said the old man, "an' so are you. Our chums are gone, an we both want to settle with them Comanche varmints; so, let's stick together."

Dick seemed delighted with this proposition, for he quickly arose from his blanket and extended his hand to his companion, who shook it heartily; and the boys read in their faces a determination to stand by each other to the last.

"I've got a chum now, youngsters," said Dick, turning to the boys; "an' one that I aint afraid to trust anywhar. Thar's nothin' like havin' a friend, even on the prairy. I come with the boys," he added, addressing his companion, who, seeing the interest Dick took in his "youngsters," slowly surveyed them from head to foot—"I come with 'em jest to show 'em how we do things on the prairy. They can shoot consid'ble sharp, an' aint afraid. All it wants is the hard knocks—fightin' Injuns an grizzlies, an' starvin' on the prairy, an' freezin' in the mountains, to make trappers of 'em." And here Dick settled back on his elbow, and proceeded to give the old man a short account of what had

transpired at Uncle Joe's cabin; described Frank's fight with the moose and panther in glowing language; told how the capture of the cubs had been effected, until old Bob began to be interested; and when Dick finished his story, he said:

"The youngsters would make good trappers."

This, as the trapper afterward told the boys, was a compliment old Bob seldom paid to any one, "for," said he, "I've knowed him a long time, an' have been in many a fight with him, an' he never told me I was good or bad."

"Wal," said Dick, again turning to his companion, "You said as how Jack Thomas was rubbed out. How did it happen?"

Old Bob refilled his pipe, smoked a few moments as if to bring the story fresh to his memory, and then answered:

"When I heered that Bill Lawson war gone, an' that you war left alone, I done my best to find you, an' get you to jine a small party we war makin' up to visit our ole huntin' grounds on the Saskatchewan; but you had tuk to the mountains, and nobody did n't know whar to go to find you. Thar war eight of us in the party, an' here, you see, are all that are left. As nigh as I can 'member, it war

'bout four year ago come spring that we sot out from the fort, whar we had sold our furs. We had three pack mules, plenty of powder, ball, an' sich like, an' we started in high sperits, tellin' the trader that bought our spelter that we 'd have a fine lot fur him ag'in next meetin' time. We knowed thar war plenty of Injuns an' sich varmints to be fit an' killed afore we come back, but that did n't trouble us none, 'cause we all knowed our own bisness, and did n't think but that we would come through all right, jest as we had done a hundred times afore. We did n't intend to stop afore we got to the Saskatchewan; so we traveled purty fast, an' in 'bout three weeks found ourselves in the Blackfoot country, nigh the Missouri River. One night we camped on a leetle stream at the foot of the mountains, an' the next mornin', jest as we war gettin' ready to start out ag'in, Jack Thomas—who, like a youngster turned loose from school, war allers runnin' round, pokin' his nose into whatever war goin' on—came gallopin' into camp, shouting:

"'Buffaler! buffaler!'

"In course, we all knowed what that meant, an' as we had n't tasted buffaler hump since leavin' the

fort, we saddled up in a hurry an' put arter the game. We went along kinder easy-like—Jack leadin' the way—until we come to the top of a swell, an' thar they war—nothin' but buffaler as fur as a feller could see. It war a purty sight, an' more 'n one of us made up our minds that we would have a good supper that night. We could n't get no nigher to 'em without bein' diskivered, so we scattered and galloped arter 'em. In course, the minit we showed ourselves they put off like the wind; but we war in easy shootin' distance, an' afore we got through with 'em, I had knocked over four big fellers an' wounded another. He war hurt so bad he could n't run; but I did n't like to go up too clost to him, so I rid off a leetle way, an' war loadin' up my rifle to give him a settler, when I heered a noise that made me prick up my ears an' look sharp. I heered a trampin, an' I knowed it war made by something 'sides a buffaler. Now, youngsters, a greenhorn would n't a seed any thing strange in that; but when I heered it, I did n't stop to kill the wounded buffaler, but turned my hoss an' made tracks. I had n't gone more 'n twenty rod afore I seed four Blackfoot Injuns comin' over a swell 'bout half a mile back. I had kept my

eyes open—as I allers do—but I had n't seen a bit of Injun sign on the prairy, an' I made up my mind to onct that them Blackfoot varmints had been shyin' round arter the same buffaler we had jest been chasin', an' that they did n't know we war 'bout till they heered us shoot. Then, in course, they put arter us, 'cause they think a heap more of scalps than they do of buffaler meat.

"Wal, as I war sayin', I made tracks sudden; but they war n't long in diskiverin' me, an' they sot up a yell. I've heered that same yell often, an' I have kinder got used to it; but I would have give my hoss, an' this rifle, too, that I have carried for goin' nigh onto twenty year, if I had been safe in Fort Laramie, 'cause I did n't think them four Injuns war alone. I war sartin they had friends not a great way off, an' somehow I a'most knowed how the hul thing was comin' out. I did n't hardly know which way to go to find our fellers, 'cause while we were arter the buffaler we had got scattered a good deal; but jest as I come to the top of a swell I seed 'em a comin'. Jack Thomas war ahead, an' he war swingin' his rifle an yellin' wusser nor any Injun. I 'll allow, Dick, that it made me feel a heap easier when I seed them trappers.

Jack, who allers knowed what war goin' on in the country fur five miles round, had first diskivered the Injuns, an' had got all the party together 'cept me, an' in course they could n't think of savin' their own venison by runnin' off and leavin' me.

"Wal, jest as soon as we got together we sot up a yell and faced 'bout. The Injuns, up to this time, had rid clost together; but when they seed that we war n't goin' to run no further jest then, they scattered as if they war goin' to surround us; an' then we all knowed that them four Injuns war n't alone. So, without stoppin' to fight 'em, we turned an' run ag'in, makin' tracks for the woods at the foot of the mountains. An' we war n't a minit too soon, fur all of a sudden we heered a yell, an' lookin' back we seed 'bout fifty more redskins comin' arter us like mad. They had a'most got us surrounded; but the way to the mountains war open, an' we run fur our lives. The varlets that had followed me war in good pluggin' distance, an' when we turned in our saddles an' drawed a bead on 'em, we had four less to deal with. It war n't more 'n ten mile to the foot of them mountains, but it seemed a hundred to us, an' we all drawed a long breath when we found ourselves under kiver

of the woods. The minit we reached the timber we jumped off our hosses, hitched them to the trees, an' made up our minds to fight it out thar an' then. We knowed, as well as we wanted to know, what the Injuns would do next—they would leave a party on the prairy to watch us, an' the rest would go sneakin' round through the woods an' pick us off one at a time. The only thing we could do—leastwise till it come dark—war to watch the varlets, an' drop every one of 'em that showed his painted face in pluggin' distance. We war in a tight place. Our pack mules, an' a'most all our kit, had been left in the camp, an' we knowed it would n't be long afore the Injuns would have 'em, an' even if we got off with our har, we would n't be much better off—no traps, no grub, an' skeercely half a dozen bullets in our pouches.

"Wal, the Injuns, when they seed that we had tuk to the timber, stopped, takin' mighty good keer, as they thought, to keep out of range of our rifles, an' began to hold a palaver, now an' then lookin' t'wards us an' settin' up a yell, which told us plain enough that they thought they had us ketched. But we, knowin' to an inch how fur our shootin' irons would carry, drawed up an' blazed away; an'

we knowed, by the way them red-skins got back ove: that swell, that we had n't throwed our lead away. They left one feller thar to watch us, howsomever, but he tuk mighty good keer to keep purty well out of sight, showin' only 'bout two inches of his head 'bove the top of the hill. While the Injuns war holdin' their council, we had a talk 'bout what we had better do. The truth war, thar war only one thing we could do, an' that war to stay thar until dark an' then take our chances. We had all fit savage Injuns enough to know that they would n't bother us much so long as daylight lasted; but arter that, if we did n't get away from thar, our lives war not worth a charge of powder. We soon made up our minds what we would do. We divided ourselves into two parties—four of us watchin' the prairy, an' the others keepin' an eye on the woods, to see that the varlets did n't slip up behind us.

"Wal, we did n't see nothin' out of the way all that day. Thar war that feller peepin' over the hill, an' that war the only thing in the shape of a red-skin we could see; an' we did n't hear nothin' neither, fur whatever they done, they did n't make noise enough to skeer a painter. At last it come

night, an' it war 'bout the darkest night I ever see—no moon, no stars—an' then we began to prick up our ears. We all knowed that the time had come. You can easy tell what we war passin' through our minds. Thar war n't no sich thing as a coward among us eight fellers, but men in sich a scrape as that can 't help thinkin', an' I knowed that every one thar drawed a long breath when he thought of what he had got to do. I tell you, Dick, it war something none of us liked to do—leave one another in that way—men that you have hunted, an' trapped, an' fought Injuns with, an' mebbe slept under the same blanket with, an' who have stuck to you through thick an' thin—sich fellers, I say, you do n't like to desart when they 're in danger. But what else could we do? We war a'most out of powder an' lead, an' the Injuns war more 'n six to our one. You have been in sich scrapes, an' in course know that thar war n't but one way open to us.

"Wal, as I was sayin', as soon as it come fairly dark, the boys gathered 'round me, an' waited to hear what I war goin' to do. In course, I could n't advise 'em, 'cause it war every feller look out fur himself, an' the best men war them as was lucky enough to get away. So I said:

"'I'm goin' to start now, boys. It's high time we war movin', cause if we stay here half an hour longer, we'll have them red-skins down on us in a lump. Thar's somethin' goin' on, sartin. They don't keep so still fur nothin'.'

"Wal, we whispered the matter over, an' finally settled it. The oldest man war to go fust; the next oldest, second; an' so on; an' that them as got away should draw a bee-line fur Fort Laramie, an' get thar to onct, so that we might know who got off an' who didn't. We didn't think we should all get away. Some war sartin to go under; an', Dick, we didn't forget to promise each other that those of us that lived would never let a red Injun cross our trail. When every thing was settled, I, bein' the oldest man in the comp'ny, began to get ready fur the start. I put fresh primin' in my rifle; seed that my knife and tomahawk war all right; then, arter shakin' hands with all the boys, an' wishin' 'em good luck, I crawled away on my hands an' knees. I didn't go back into the woods, but tuk to the edge of the prairy, an' found the way cl'ar. Not an Injun did I hear. As fur seein', you couldn't a told your mother, if she warn't two foot from you; an' in 'bout half an hour I found my-

self on the banks of a leetle creek. How long I lay thar, an' how much of that water I drunk, I don't know; but I thought water never tasted so good afore. Then I walked into the creek, an' had waded in it fur 'bout half a mile, when all to onct I heered a yellin' an' whoopin', followed by the crack of rifles, an' then I knowed that I had n't been fooled consarnin' what the red-skins meant to do. They had got what war left of our fellers surrounded, an' made the rush. Fur a minit I stood thar in the water an' listened. I heered a few shots made by our poor fellers, 'cause I can tell the crack of a Missouri rifle as fur as I can hear it; an' then one long, loud yell, told me that it war all over.

"Wal, I laid round in them mountains fur more 'n six weeks, starvin' fur grub an' water, an' listenin' to the yellin' varlets that war huntin arter me; but I got back safe at last, arter walkin' all the way from the Rocky Mountains to the fort, an' thar I found Jack Thomas. Me an' him war the only ones that got out. When the Injuns got them six fellers, they rubbed out nearly the last one of our comp'ny. Me an' Jack war mighty downhearted 'bout it, an' it war a long time afore we could b lieve that we war left alone. We did n't

feel then like ever goin' back to the mountains ag'in, 'cause we knowed it would be lonesome thar. In course, we could easy have made up another expedition, fur thar war plenty of hunters an' trappers—good ones, too—hangin' round the fort; but somehow we did n't feel like goin' off with any one outside of our own comp'ny.

"Wal, me an' Jack laid round as long as we could stand it, an' then we got a couple of hosses, another new kit, an' sot off ag'in. We did n't think it safe fur only two of us to try the Blackfoot country ag'in, so we struck for the huntin' grounds on the Colorado. At that time thar war plenty of beaver in that river; so it did n't take us long to find a place that suited us; an' we settled down, comfortable-like, to spend the winter. Fur three months we had plenty of sport, an' the sight of our pile of furs, growin' bigger an' bigger every day, made us happy an' contented. One mornin' we sot out bright an' 'arly, as usual, to 'tend to our bisness, takin' different directions—fur my traps war sot on the side of the mountain, an' Jack had sot his 'ne on the banks of the creek that run through the valley. I had been gone frum him but a short time, when I heered the crack of his rifle. Some-

how, I knowed it war somethin' 'sides a varmint he had shot at; an' I war n't fooled neither, for a minit arterward I heered another gun, an' then afore I could think twice a Comanche yell come echoin' from the valley, tellin' me plainer nor words that my chum war gone. An Injun had watched one of his traps, an' shot him as he come to it. I knowed it as sartin as if I had seed the hul thing done.

"Wal, I war n't in a fix kalkerlated to make a feller feel very pleasant. I war three hundred miles from the nighest fort, in the very heart of the Comanche country, an' in the dead of winter, with the snow two foot deep on a level. But I did n't stop to think of them things then. My bisness war to get away from thar to onct. In course, I could n't go back arter my hoss or spelter, fur I did n't know how many Injuns thar war in the valley, nor whar they had hid themselves; so I shouldered my rifle an' sot off on foot t'wards the prairy. A storm that come up that night—an' it snowed an' blowed in a way that war n't a funny thing to look at—kivered up my trail; an' if I war ever follered, I do n't know it.

"I finally reached the fort, an' I 've been thar ever

since. I'm an ole chap now, Dick; but when I hunted an' trapped with your ole man, when me an' him war n't bigger nor them two youngsters, an' had n't hardly strength enough to shoulder a rifle, I never thought that I should live to be the last of our comp'ny. In them days the prairy war different from what it is now. It war afore the hoss-thieves an' rascals began to come in here to get away from the laws of the States; an' them that called themselves trappers then war honest men, that never did harm to a lone person on the prairy. But they 've gone, one arter the other, an' only me an' you are left."

As the old trapper ceased speaking, he arose suddenly to his feet and disappeared in the darkness, leaving Dick gazing thoughtfully into the fire. It was an hour before he returned, mounted on his horse, which he picketed with the others. He then silently rolled himself up in his blanket and went to sleep.

CHAPTER V.

A Fight with the Indians.

HEN setting out the next morning, Frank noticed that the wagons, instead of starting off singly, and straggling, as they had formerly done, kept close together, and traveled more rapidly. The trapper, too, instead of taking the lead, and getting in advance of the train, seemed satisfied to remain with the others. Upon inquiring the reason for this, Dick replied:

"You may find out afore night, youngster, that we are in a bad bit of Injun country. The train that went out afore us had a scrimmage here with nigh five hundred of the red-skins, who stampeded some of their stock. So keep your eyes open, an' if you see a Injun, let me know to onct." The trapper said this with a broad grin, that was meant

to imply that if they were attacked, the Indians would make their appearance before a person so inexperienced as Frank could be aware of it.

"The red-skins do n't gener'lly keer 'bout an out-an'-out fight," continued the trapper, "'cause they do n't like these long rifles, an' they know that these yere pioneers shoot mighty sharp. All the Injuns want—or all they can get—is the stock; an' they sometimes jump on to a train afore a feller knows it, an' yell an' kick up a big fuss, which frightens the cattle. That 's what we call stampedin' 'em. An', youngster, do you see that 'ar?"

As the trapper spoke, he pointed out over the prairie towards a little hill about two miles distant. After gazing for a few moments in the direction indicated, Archie replied:

"I see something that looks like a weed or a tuft of grass."

"Wal, that 's no weed," said the trapper, with a laugh, "nor grass, neither. If it is, it 's on hossback, an' carries a shootin'-iron or a bow an' arrer. That 's a Injun, or I never seed one afore. What do you say, Bob?" he asked, turning to the old trapper, who at this moment came up.

"I seed that five minutes ago," was the reply, "an' in course it can 't be nothin' but a red-skin."

The boys gazed long and earnestly at the object, but their eyes were not as sharp as those of the trappers, for they could not discover that it bore any resemblance to an Indian, until Mr. Winters handed them his field-glass through which he had been regarding the object ever since its discovery. Then they found that the trappers had not been deceived. It was a solitary Indian, who sat on his horse as motionless as a statue, no doubt watching the train, and endeavoring to satisfy himself of the number of men there might be to defend it. In his hand he carried something that looked like a spear adorned with a tuft of feathers.

"I wish the varlet was in good pluggin' distance," said Dick, patting his rifle which lay across his knees. "If I could only get a bead on him, he would never carry back to his fellers the news of what he has seed."

"Do you suppose there are more of them?" asked Archie, in a voice that would tremble in spite of himself.

"Sartin," replied old Bob Kelly, who still rode beside the wagon; "thar 's more of 'em not fur

off. This feller is a kind o' spy like, an' when he has seen exactly how things stand, he 'll go back an' tell the rest of 'em, an' the fust thing we know, they 'll be down on us like a hawk on a June-bug. But they 'll ketch a weasel, *they* will, when they pitch into us. Dick, when they do come, do n't forget Bill Lawson."

The trapper turned his head, for a moment, as if to hide the emotion he felt, at the mention of the name of his departed companion, but presently replied:

"This aint the fust time that you an' me have been in jest sich scrapes, Bob, an' it aint likely that we 'll soon forget that we owe the varlets a long settlement. Thar aint as many of us now as thar used to be; more 'n one good trapper has had his har raised by them same red-skins—fur I know a Cheyenne as fur as I kin see him, youngsters—an' mebbe one o' these days, when some one asks, 'What 's come on ole Bob Kelly an' Dick Lewis?' the answer will be, 'Killed by the Injuns!'"

It may be readily supposed that such conversation as this was not calculated to quiet the feelings of Frank and Archie—who had been consid-

erably agitated by the information that there was a body of hostile Indians at no great distance—and to their excited imaginations the danger appeared tenfold worse than it really was. At that day, as the trapper had remarked, it was a very uncommon occurrence for a large train to be engaged in a regular fight with the Indians, for the latter had learned to their cost that the pioneers were always well armed, and that there were some among them who understood Indian fighting. They generally contented themselves with sudden and rapid raids upon the stock of the emigrants, and they seldom departed empty-handed. But it is not to be wondered that the trappers, who had participated in numberless engagements with the savages, and witnessed deeds of cruelty that had awakened in them a desire for vengeance, should delight to talk over their experience. The boys, although considerably frightened, were still greatly encouraged by their example. Dick twisted uneasily on his seat, as though impatient for the fight to begin, now and then looking toward the spy, as if he had half a mind to venture a shot at him; while old Bob Kelly rode along, smoking his pipe, apparently as unconcerned as though there was not a

hostile Indian within a hundred miles of them. Mr. Winters evidently partook of the old man's indifference, for, after satisfying himself that his weapons were in readiness, he drew back beside his nephews, and said, with a smile:

"Well, boys, you may have an opportunity to try your skill on big game now. This will be a little different from the fight you had in the woods with those Indians who stole your traps. Then you had the force on your side; now the savages are the stronger party. But there 's no danger," he added, quickly seeing that the boys looked rather anxious; "every man in the train is a good shot, and the most of them have been in Indian fights before. I do n't believe all the red-skins on the prairie could whip us while we have Dick and Bob with us."

The boys themselves had great confidence in the trappers—especially Dick, who, they knew, would never desert them. But even *he* had several times been worsted by the Indians. Frank thought of the story of the lost wagon train. But then he remembered that the reason that train was captured, was because the emigrants had not "stood up to the mark like men."

All this while the train had been moving ahead at a rapid pace, and many an anxious eye was directed toward the solitary Indian, who remained standing where he was first discovered until the wagons had passed, when he suddenly and mysteriously disappeared. All that day the emigrants rode with their weapons in their hands, in readiness to repel an attack; and when they halted at noon, guards were posted about the camp, and the cattle were kept close to the wagons. But, although now and then a single Indian would be seen upon one of the distant swells, the main body kept out of sight; and the boys began to hope that the train was considered too large to be successfully attacked. At night old Bob Kelly selected the place for the encampment, which was made according to his directions. The wagons were drawn up in a circle to form a breastwork, and the cattle were picketed close by under the protection of a strong guard. Fires were built, and preparations for supper carried on as usual, for, of course, all attempts at concealment would have been time and labor thrown away. As soon as it began to grow dark, the cattle were secured to the wagons by long stout ropes, which, while they allowed the

animals to graze, effectually prevented escape. Then guards were selected, and the emigrants made every preparation to give the savages a warm reception, in case they should make a dash upon the camp. No one thought of his blanket. The idea of going to sleep while a band of Indians was hovering about, watching their opportunity to pounce down upon them, was out of the question. The two trappers, after satisfying themselves that every thing was in readiness for an attack, began to station the guards. Frank again thought of the story Dick had related of the lost wagon train, and, desiring to witness an exhibition of the skill that had enabled him to detect the presence of the Indians on that occasion, proposed to Archie that they should stand guard with him. The latter, who always felt safe when in the company of their guide, agreed; and when the trapper started off with the guards, he was surprised to find the boys at his side.

"Whar are you goin'?" he asked.

"We want to stand guard with you!" replied Frank.

"Wal, I never *did* see sich keerless fellers as you be," said the trapper. "You get wusser an'

wusser. Much you don't know about this bisness I guess you had better stay here whar you're safe."

"Wal, wal!" said old Bob Kelly, who was not a little astonished at the request the boys had made, "they've got the real grit in 'em, that's a fact, if they are green as punkins in Injun fightin'. A few year on the prairy would make 'em as good as me or you, Dick Lewis. But you'll get enough of Injuns afore you see daylight ag'in, youngsters. So you had better stay here."

So saying he shouldered his rifle, and, followed by the guards, disappeared in the darkness. The boys reluctantly returned to their wagon, where they found Uncle James, seated on the ground, whistling softly to himself, and apparently indifferent as to the course the Indians might see fit to adopt. But still he had not neglected to make preparations to receive them, for his rifle stood leaning against one of the wheels of the wagon, and he carried his revolvers in his belt. The boys silently seated themselves on the ground beside him, and awaited the issue of events with their feelings worked up to the highest pitch of excitement. The fires had burned low, but still there

was light sufficient to enable them to discover the emigrants stretched on the ground about the wagons, talking to one another in whispers, as if almost afraid to break the stillness that brooded over the camp, and which was interrupted only by the barking of the prairie wolves, and the neighing and tramping of the horses. Two hours were passed in this way, when suddenly the sharp report of a rifle, accompanied by a terrific yell, rang out on the air, causing the emigrants to grasp their weapons and spring to their feet in alarm. For an instant all was silent again. The stillness was so deep that Frank thought the camp was suddenly deserted. Then a long drawn out whoop arose from the prairie, followed by a chorus of yells that struck terror to more than one heart in that wagon train. Then came a clatter of horses' hoofs; the yells grew louder and louder; and the boys knew that the Indians were coming toward them. The emigrants rushed to the wagons, and the next moment the savages swept by. The boys saw a confused mass of rapidly-moving horsemen; heard the most terrific yells, the report of fire-arms, and the struggles of the frightened cattle as they attempted to escape, and then all was over. The Indians de-

parted as rapidly as they had come, and the boys, bewildered by the noise, had not fired a shot. On the contrary, they stood holding their rifles in their hands, as if they had suddenly forgotten how to use them. Uncle James, however, was not confused. He had heard the war-whoop before, and as he came out from behind the wagon, he began to reload one of his revolvers, remarking as he did so:

"There are some less in that band, I know."

"Did you shoot?" asked Archie, drawing a long breath of relief to know that the danger was past. "Why, I didn't have time to fire a shot."

"That's because you were frightened," replied Mr. Winters. "You see I have been in skirmishes like this before, and their yells don't make me nervous. I had five good shots at them, and I don't often miss."

"I say, youngsters, are you all right?" exclaimed Dick, who at this moment came up. "See here! I've got two fellers' top-knots. Bless you, they aint scalps," he continued, as the boys drew back. "They're only the feathers the Injuns wear in their har. I don't scalp Cheyennes, 'cause I don't keer 'bout 'em. I make war on 'em 'cause it's natur. But when I knock over a Co-

manche, I take his har jest to 'member ole Bill by. But, youngsters, warn't that jolly! I haven't heered a Injun yell fur more 'n a year, an it makes me feel to hum. You can take these feathers, an' when you get back to Lawrence, tell the folks thar that the Injuns that wore 'em onct attacked the train you belonged to."

The emigrants' first care, after having satisfied themselves that the Indians had gone, was to count their stock; and more than one had to mourn the loss of a favorite horse or mule, which had escaped and gone off with the Indians. Mr. Winters, however, had lost nothing—the trapper having tied the animals so securely that escape was impossible. Not a person in the train was injured—the only damage sustained being in the canvas covers of the wagons, which were riddled with bullets and arrows.

The boys were still far from feeling safe, and probably would not have gone to bed that night had they not seen the trappers spreading their blankets near the wagon. This re-assured them, for those men never would have thought of rest if there had been the least probability that the Indians would return. So the boys took their beds out

of the wagon and placed them beside those of Dick and his companion, who were talking over the events of the night.

"This bisness of fightin' Injuns, youngsters," said the former, "is one that aint larnt out of books, nor in the woods about Lawrence. If you had a-been with us, you would a seed that. Now, when I fust went out thar, you could n't 'a' told that thar war a red-skin on the prairy. But I laid my ear to the ground, an' purty quick I heerd a rumblin' like, an' I knowed the noise war made by hosses. Arter that, I heerd a rustlin' in the grass, an' seed a Injun sneakin' along, easy like, t'wards the camp. So I drawed up my ole shootin' iron, an' done the bisness fur him, an' then started fur the camp, loadin' my rifle as I ran. In course the Injuns seed then that it war n't no use to go a-foolin' with us, so they all set up a yell, an' here they come. I dodged under the wagon, an' as they went by, I give 'em another shot, an' seed a red-skin go off dead."

"Go off dead!" repeated Frank. "How could he go off when he was dead?"

"Why," said the trapper, with a laugh, in which he was joined by old Bob Kelly, "every one of

them Injuns war tied fast to his hoss, so that if he war killed he would n't fall off; an', in course, his hoss would keep on with the rest, an' carry him away. I seed more 'n one Injun go off dead to-night, an' the way I come to get them feathers, b'longin' to them two chaps, war, that somebody had shot their hosses. I seed 'em on the ground, tryin' to cut themselves loose from their saddles, so I run up an' settled 'em. That war four I rubbed out. Good-night, youngsters. You need n't be afraid, 'cause they won't come back again to-night."

As the trapper spoke, he placed his cap under his head for a pillow, re-arranged his blanket, and was soon in a sound sleep.

During the next two weeks nothing occurred to relieve the monotony of the journey. The train took up its line of march at daylight, halted at noon for an hour or two, and shortly after sunset encamped for the night. The fight with the Indians had not driven all thoughts of the antelopes out of the boys' minds. And while the train journeyed along the road, they scoured the prairie, in search of the wished-for game. The appearance of the "sea of grass," which stretched away on all sides,

as far as their eyes could reach, not a little surprised them. Instead of the perfectly level plain they had expected to see, the surface of the prairie was broken by gentle swells, like immense waves of the ocean, and here and there—sometimes two or three days' journey apart—were small patches of woods, called "oak openings."

One night they made their camp in sight of the Rocky Mountains. While the trapper was cooking their supper, he said to the boys, who had thrown themselves on the ground near the wagon:

"It aint fur from here that me an' ole Bill Lawson lost that wagon train. I never travel along here that I do n't think of that night, an' I sometimes feel my cap rise on my head, jest as it did when them Injuns come pourin' into the camp. But the varlets have been pushed back further an' further, an' now a feller 's as safe here as he would be in Fort Laramie. The ole bar's hole aint more 'n fifty mile from here, an' if your uncle do n't mind the ride, I should like to show you the cave that has so often sarved me fur a hidin' place."

The boys looked toward Mr. Winters, who, hav

ing frequently heard the guide speak of the "ole bar's hole," felt some curiosity to see it. So, after being assured by both the trappers that there was no danger to be apprehended, he gave his consent, remarking:

"We are in no hurry. I don't suppose there is any possibility of being lost so long as we have Dick and Bob for guides; so we will go there, and take a week's rest and a hunt."

The boys were delighted, and the next morning, when the train resumed its journey, the emigrants were not a little surprised to see Mr. Winters' wagon moving off by itself.

That night, when our travelers encamped, they were thirty miles from the train, and about the same distance from the "ole bar's hole." The mountains were plainly visible, and the boys could scarcely believe that they were nearly a day's journey distant. They were certain that a ride of an hour or two would bring them to the willows that skirted their base.

"'T aint the fust time I've seed fellers fooled 'bout sich things," said Dick. "Do you see that 'ar high peak?" he continued, pointing to a single mountain that rose high above the others. "Wal,

thar's whar the ole bar's hole is. If we reach it afore dark to-morrer night, I 'll agree to set you down in Sacramento in two weeks."

The boys were still far from being convinced, and they went to sleep that night fully believing that they would reach the mountains by noon the next day.

CHAPTER VI.

Lost on the Prairie.

THE next morning, by the time the sun had risen, the travelers had eaten their breakfast, and were again on the move. The entire party was in high spirits. The trappers laughed and joked with each other, and pointed out to Mr. Winters the familiar objects that met their eye on every side, while the boys galloped on before, and in a few moments had left the wagon far behind. Their horses were in excellent trim, and bounded along over the prairie as if some of their riders' spirits had been infused into them.

"I say, Frank," said Archie, at length, suddenly drawing in his rein, "what if Dick was mistaken about the Indians all being gone, and a party of Comanches should suddenly pounce down on us? Wouldn't we be in a fix? I declare, I see an In-

dian now," he added; and, as he spoke, he pointed toward an object that could be dimly seen moving along the summit of a distant swell.

"That's something, that's a fact," said Frank, gazing in the direction indicated; "but it don't look like that Indian we saw the other day. If it was a Comanche, he wouldn't move about and show himself so plainly. There's another—and another," he continued, as several more objects came over the brow of the hill. "Let us ride up a little nearer. If they are Indians, we can easily reach the wagon before they can overtake us."

"Well, come on," said Archie. "If we should get into a fight all by ourselves, and come safely out of it, it would be something to talk about, wouldn't it?"

The boys rode cautiously toward the objects, which were still increasing in number, holding themselves in readiness to beat a hasty retreat in case they should prove to be Indians, until they had gone about half a mile, when Frank suddenly exclaimed:

"They are antelopes!"

"Are they?" asked Archie, excitedly. "Let's shoot one of 'em," and, springing from his saddle,

he began to unbuckle his halter and hobble his horse, as he had seen the trapper do on a former occasion.

Frank followed his example, and then, securing their rifles, they threw themselves on their hands and knees, and began to crawl toward the game, which was fully a mile and a half distant. But that was no obstacle to the boys then. They would willingly have gone twice that far to have a shot at an antelope, if for nothing more than to show the trapper that they were better hunters than he had supposed. It is true they did not expect to succeed, but the name "antelope killers" was well worth trying for, and they determined to do their best. They crawled along slowly and as carefully as possible, pausing now and then to look over the grass at the animals, which, to their delight, they found were feeding directly toward them.

"I don't think it is safe to go much further," said Frank, after they had crawled nearly half the distance in this manner. "Let's stop and see what we can do."

"Well," said Archie. "If you will hold up your handkerchief on your ramrod, I'll try and shoot one of them, if they come near enough."

Frank, in compliance with his cousin's suggestion, drew his ramrod from his gun, fastened his handkerchief to it, and, throwing himself upon his back, carefully raised it above the grass. While in this position he could not, of course, see the movements of the game; but Archie kept vigilant watch, and at length whispered:

"They see it! They're coming!"

The animals had, in reality, caught sight of the handkerchief, and, after regarding it for a few moments, they began to approach it—a fine large buck leading the way.

Now the boys knew that the hunt began in earnest. The least awkward movement on their part—the exposure of the smallest portion of their bodies, or the slightest noise in the grass—might, as Archie expressed it, "knock the whole thing in the head." Frank lay perfectly quiet, watching the movements of his cousin; and he could tell, by the expression of his countenance, pretty near what the game was doing. When the antelopes stopped—which they did every few feet—Archie put on an exceedingly long face, as if fearful that they were about to turn and run; and when they approached, the fact would be indicated by a broad grin and a nervous

twitching at the lock of his gun. For fully half an hour—it seemed much longer to the impatient boys—they remained in their place of concealment; but at length their patience was rewarded, for the game was within easy rifle range. In an instant Archie's nervousness all vanished, and Frank almost held his breath when he saw him slowly, inch by inch, raise his gun to his shoulder. He took a long, steady aim, pulled the trigger, and sprung from the ground, shouting:

"I've got him! I've got him!"

Frank was on his feet almost as soon as his cousin, and, to his delight, saw the leader of the antelopes struggling on the ground, while the rest of the herd were scampering away at the top of their speed.

"What will Dick and Bob say now?" exclaimed Archie, who skipped about as though he were almost beside himself. "What will they—hold on—hold on—shoot him, Frank!" he shouted. "We're going to lose him after all."

Archie's shot had not been fatal. The buck was only disabled for a moment, and, after a few struggles, he succeeded in regaining his feet, and started to run. Had his cousin been as excited as he was,

they certainly would have had all their trouble for nothing, for Archie, instead of stopping to reload, dropped his gun and started in pursuit of the wounded animal, which—although he ran but slowly—was fast leaving him behind, when Frank, by an excellent shot, again brought him to the ground. This time the wound was fatal; but Archie, to put all further attempts at escape out of the question, ran up and seized the buck by the horns.

"He 's done for now," said Frank, as he proceeded to reload his rifle; "I shot him through the head."

"I see you did," replied his cousin, still retaining his hold upon the antelope; "but there 's no knowing what he might do. I would n't trust him." And it was not until he had turned the deer over several times, and fully satisfied himself that he had ceased to breathe, that Archie released him.

"What will Dick and Bob say now?" he continued, as Frank came up, and they began to examine their prize, which was much larger than the one the trapper had killed. "You know they said we could n't shoot an antelope. Now, the next

thing is to get him back to the wagon. He 's too heavy for us to carry, so if you 'll stay here, and watch him and keep the wolves off, I 'll go back and get the horses."

Frank agreed to this arrangement, and Archie, after he had found and reloaded his gun, started off after the horses. He was gone almost two hours—so long that Frank began to be uneasy; but at length he appeared, riding post-haste over a neighboring swell, mounted on Sleepy Sam, and leading Pete by the bridle. As soon as he came within speaking distance, he exclaimed, with blanched cheeks:

"Frank, we 're lost! I can't see the wagon any where."

"Do n't be uneasy," replied his cousin, who, although thoroughly alarmed by this announcement, appeared to be perfectly unconcerned. "Don't be uneasy."

"But I have n't seen the wagon since we left it this morning," persisted Archie. "I thought it was close behind us. I tell you we 're lost."

"Oh no, I guess not," answered Frank, as he lifted the antelope from the ground and placed it on the saddle before his cousin. "The wagon is

no doubt behind some of these hills. Besides, Uncle James won't be long in hunting us up."

"I would n't stay alone on the prairie to-night for any thing," said Archie. "I know it would n't be the first time I have camped out, but then there are no wild Indians in the woods about Lawrence."

Frank had by this time mounted his horse, and together they set out at a rapid gallop to find the wagon. The mountain which Dick had pointed out the night before was plainly visible, and the boys determined to travel toward it with all possible speed, in hopes that they would overtake their friends before they halted for the night. Frank thought the wagon could not be far off, and every hill they mounted he gazed about him as if fully expecting to discover it; but, after riding an hour without seeing any signs of it, he began to be a good deal of his cousin's opinion, that they were lost. But he made no remark, for he knew that a good deal depended upon keeping up Archie's courage.

"We have not been gone from the wagon three hours," said he, "and they have n't had time to get very far away from us. We 'll find them be-

hind some of these swells. Perhaps we 'll be in time to give them a piece of our antelope for dinner."

Archie made no reply, for he derived no encouragement from this; but he silently followed his cousin, who led the way at a rapid gallop, riding over this swell, and turning round that, as though he was perfectly familiar with the ground over which they were traveling. For two long hours they kept on in this way, almost without speaking, each time they mounted a hill straining their eyes in every direction, in the hope of discovering the wagon. Sometimes they were almost certain they saw its white cover in the distance; but upon taking a second look, it proved to have been merely a creation of their imagination; and Frank began to be discouraged. To add to their discomfort, the heat was almost intolerable, and they began to be tortured with thirst. Their animals also appeared to be suffering, for they paid less attention to the spur, and were constantly jerking at the reins, and endeavoring to go in a direction almost contrary to that which the boys desired. The hours seemed lengthened into ages, and at three o'clock in the afternoon they had

seen no signs of the wagon, and the mountains appeared to be as far off as ever.

"There's no use talking," said Archie, at length, reining in his horse, "I can't stand this any longer, I'm so thirsty."

"But what else can we do?" asked Frank, in a husky voice, for his tongue was so parched that he could scarcely talk plainly. "We can't find our friends, or water either, by staying here. We *must* go on."

As he spoke, he again spurred his horse into a gallop, Archie, as before, following after him, now and then looking down at the antelope, which lay across his saddle—and which he considered to be the cause of all their trouble—as though he heartily wished him safe among the others of the herd. Two miles more were passed, but still no signs of water. The idea of finding the wagon had now given away to a desire to discover some stream where they might quench their thirst, which was becoming almost unbearable. But the dry, parched prairie stretched away on each side of them, while in front loomed the mountains, apparently as distant as when they started in the morning. Their horses grew more and more restive.

Upon applying the spur, they would gallop for a few yards, and then settle down into a slow walk, turning their heads and pulling at the reins as if anxious to go in a contrary direction. This set Frank to thinking. He had often read of the remarkable sagacity sometimes displayed by the horse—how the animal had been known to carry his lost rider safely into the midst of his friends—and, turning to his cousin, he exclaimed:

"Archie, I'm going to let Pete take his own course. Both the horses want to go back, so let's see where they will take us to. We can't be in a much worse fix than we are now."

As he spoke, he threw the reins on his horse's neck, and the animal, finding himself at liberty, at once turned, and, pricking up his ears, galloped off exactly at right angles with the course they had been pursuing. Archie, too dispirited to raise any objections, followed his cousin's example, and the old buffalo hunter, which, during the last two hours, had traveled with his head down, as if scarcely able to take another step, snuffed the air and bounded off at a rapid pace. For an hour the animals tore along at a tremendous rate; but discovering no signs of the wagon, Frank was rapidly

losing faith in the sagacity of his horse, when, as they came suddenly around the base of a swell, they found before them a long line of willows. Toward this the animals made their way with increased speed, carrying their riders through the trees into a stream of clear, running water.

CHAPTER VII.

The Trapper's Reminiscence.

THE horses did not stop on the bank, but, in spite of the desperate efforts of the boys, kept on, until the water reached half way to their backs. The old buffalo hunter, not satisfied with this, persisted in lying down; and Archie and the antelope were deposited in the middle of the stream. Under any other circumstances, the young hunter would have been angry; but, as it was, the cool bath was most refreshing after his long ride over the dry prairie, under the hot, scorching sun; so seizing the antelope, he dragged him to the shore, leaving his horse to take care of himself.

Thirsty as the boys were, they still retained their presence of mind; instead of endangering his life by drinking freely of the water, Archie

contented himself with repeatedly bathing his head, while Frank, who was still in his saddle, reached down and scooped up a few drops in his hand.

"I say, Frank, is n't this glorious?" said Archie at length, as he divested himself of his coat, which he hung upon a limb to dry. "But it 's lucky that my ammunition is water-proof. If you had been in my fix, you would n't be able to do much more shooting until we got back to our wagon. I declare, it 's getting dark. Where do you suppose that wagon is? If we do n't find it inside of fifteen minutes, we shall have to camp."

"Let 's stay here," said Frank, as he rode his horse out of the water, and fastened him to a tree. "We must stay somewhere all night, and this is as good a camping-ground as we can find."

"If Dick or Bob was here," said Archie, "I would n't mind it; but I do n't like the idea of our staying here alone. This is the worst scrape I was ever in; but if I once get along-side of that wagon again, I 'll stay there."

"Oh, you 've been in worse scrapes than this," said Frank, who saw that his cousin was losing heart again.

"I'd like to know when and where?" said Archie, looking up in astonishment.

"Why, you were in a much more dangerous situation while you were hanging by that limb, fifty feet from the ground, when you were after that 'coon that led you such a long chase."

"I can't see it," replied Archie. "I knew that if I got down safe, I would be among friends, and if I had to camp in the woods there would be no Comanches or grizzly bears waiting for a chance to jump down on me. I say, Frank, there *may* be grizzly bears about here," and Archie peered through the trees, reaching rather hurriedly for his gun, as if fully expecting to see one of those ferocious animals advancing upon him. "But what are you about?" he continued, as he saw Frank removing the saddle from his horse.

"I'm getting ready to camp," replied Frank, coolly.

Archie at first strongly objected to this, but Frank finally carried the day, by assuring him that it was the much better plan to "take matters easy," and wait for daylight, when they would again set out. Besides, if they traveled in the dark, they might go miles out of their way. Archie, although not con-

vinced, finally agreed to his cousin's proposition, remarking:

"If you were in the fourth story of a burning house, I wonder if you would n't talk of taking matters easy?"

It was settled then that they should remain where they were for the night, and they began to make preparations accordingly. Archie's horse was relieved of the saddle, and, after both the animals had been led on to the prairie, they were hobbled and left to graze. Frank then began to skin and dress the buck, while Archie gathered a supply of wood, and kindled a fire. In half an hour several slices of venison were broiling on the coals, and the boys were lying before the fire, talking over the events of the day, and wondering what Dick and Bob would say when they learned that their "youngsters" had killed an antelope, when they were startled by a well-known bark, and the next moment Useless came bounding through the trees into the very center of the camp, where he frisked and jumped about with every demonstration of joy. The boys had scarcely recovered from their alarm, when they heard a familiar voice exclaim:

"Bar an' buffaler! You keerless fellers!" and

the trapper came through the willows with long, impatient strides.

The boys were always glad to see Dick, but words are too feeble to express the joy they felt at his sudden and wholly unexpected appearance. For a moment they seemed to have lost the power of speech.

The trapper glanced hastily from one to the other, took in at a glance the preparations for the night, and, dropping the butt of his rifle heavily to the ground, again ejaculated:

"You keerless fellers!"

"What's the matter, Dick?" asked Archie, whose spirits were now as exalted as they had before been depressed. "We're all right. Sit down and have some supper."

"Youngsters," said the trapper, seating himself on the ground, and depositing his rifle beside him, "I jest knowed I would find you all right. Now, tell me whar have you been, an' what a doin'?"

"Do you see that?" exclaimed Archie, jumping up and pointing to the remains of the antelope, which Frank had hung up on a tree. "Do you see it? You said we couldn't kill a prong-horn, but we've done it."

The boys then proceeded to recount their adventures, telling the trapper how they had killed the antelope, of their long ride under the scorching sun, and how at last their horses had brought them to the water—to all of which the trapper listened with amazement, and feelings of admiration that he could not disguise.

"Wal," said he, when they had concluded, "I won't tell you to try it over ag'in, 'cause you can't allers be so lucky."

"What did uncle say?" inquired Archie, who was rather apprehensive of a "lecture."

"Oh, he knowed as how thar war no Injuns to massacre you, an' when we camped fur noon, I heered him say, 'I wonder what the boys have got fur dinner?' I knowed me and Useless could easy find you. That ar dog knowed jest as well that I war arter you as I did myself."

"Well," said Frank, "whenever you get ready, we'll go back to the camp."

"To camp!" repeated the trapper. "Haint you rid fur enough yet? Can you stand twenty miles more to-night?"

"Twenty miles!" echoed both the boys, in surprise.

"Sartin! You're further away from the ole bar's hole now than you were last night."

The young hunters were astonished. Although they had had the Rocky Mountains for a guide-post, they had been completely turned round, and had actually traveled ten miles back toward St. Joseph.

"That's what comes of not knowin' nothin' 'bout the prairy!" continued the trapper, helping himself to a piece of the venison. "But we'll stay here to-night, an' strike fur camp in the mornin'."

The boys were very well satisfied with this arrangement, for their long ride had wearied them, and Archie was willing to brave grizzly bears, so long as he was in Dick's company.

After supper—which consisted of venison, without bread or coffee—the trapper lighted his pipe with a brand from the fire, and, settling back on his elbow, said:

"I've seed the time, youngsters, when it wouldn't a been healthy fur you two fellers to be out here alone. I've seed that prairy a'most black with Comanches, an have heered 'em yellin' among these ere very willows. If you had been settin

whar you are now 'bout fifteen year ago, you would have seed me goin' through these trees, an' swimmin' that ar creek, with a hul tribe of yellin' an' screechin' red-skins clost to my heels. I showed your uncle, this mornin', the very place whar I onct run the gauntlet of more'n a hundred Comanches. I tell you, youngsters, I know every foot of this ground. Many a time me an' poor ole Bill Lawson have skrimmaged with the Injuns through here, when it war more'n a feller's har war wuth to come to this creek arter a drink o' water. But I told you 'bout runnin' the gauntlet. The way it happened war this:

"'Bout fifteen year ago, me an' ole Bill Lawson war trappin' among the mountains, twenty-five miles from the ole bar's hole. We, in course, had fine sport, 'cause me an' ole Bill allers knowed whar to go to find the best trappin' grounds; an', by the time spring opened, we had as much spelter as we could tote away on our backs. It war gettin' purty nigh time fur the Comanches to come round on their spring hunt, an' we began to talk of leavin'; but thar war plenty of beaver left in the valley, an' we didn't like to go so long as thar war any game to trap, so we kept puttin' it off, an'

when at last we did start, it war too late to get off with our plunder.

"One mornin', jest at daylight, while I war in front of the shantee cookin' my breakfast, ole Bill come in from 'tendin' to his traps, an' said:

"'Dick, the valley's chuck full o' red-skins. I jest seed more sign down by the creek than I ever seed afore 'bout this place, an' that's sayin' a good deal. We had better shoulder our spelter an' be off to onct.'

"I didn't stop to think any more 'bout breakfast jest then, but I ran into the shantee, grabbed my furs, which I allers kept tied up ready for a move, an' me an' ole Bill started out. The Injuns must have come in durin' the night, 'cause the day afore thar warn't a bit of sign to be seed fur ten miles 'round the valley. But we didn't stop then to think how or when they got in, but how should we get out. It warn't no easy thing to do, youngsters—to go through them mountains, swarmin' with red-skins. They don't walk through the woods like a feller does when he's squirrel huntin', but they go sneakin' round, an' listenin', an' peepin'; an' if a chap don't understand their natur, he'd better not go among 'em.

"Wal, ole Bill led the way, sometimes a'most on his knees, his rifle in his hand, an' his bundle of furs on his shoulder, I followin' clost at his heels—both of us keepin' our eyes open, an' stoppin' now an' then to listen. We had made 'bout a mile up the mountain in this way, when, all to onct, ole Bill stopped and looked straight before him. I stopped, too, an' seed three big Comanches comin' along easy like, lookin' at the ground, examinin' the bushes, an' whisperin' to each other. They had found a trail that either me or ole Bill had made the day afore, an' war tryin' to foller it up. But me an' the ole man warn't the ones to leave a path that could be followed easy when we thought thar war red-skins 'round; an' I guess it bothered them rascals some to tell which way we had gone, an' how many thar war of us. But they did foller it up slowly, an' while we war lookin' at 'em they were jined by another Injun, who seemed to be a chief, for he whispered a few orders, an' two of the Comanches made off. They had been sent to rouse the camp, an' we knowed that we couldn't get away from that valley any too fast. The red-skins warn't more 'n a hundred yards from us, an' we knowed it would take mighty keerful movin' to get away

from them without bein' diskivered. But it war life or death with us, an' we began to crawl slowly through the bushes. A greenhorn couldn't have heered a leaf rustle if he hadn't been two foot from us; but thar's a heap of difference atween a greenhorn's ears an' them that a Injun carries. But they didn't hear us, fur as long as we war in sight we seed them still follerin' up the ole trail; an' as soon as we thought we had got out of hearin' of them, we jumped to our feet an' run like a pair of quarter hosses. We didn't make no more noise than we could help, but we hadn't gone fur afore the mountains echoed with the war-whoop, an' a couple of arrers whizzed by our heads. The Injuns had diskivered us. In course, we both dropped like a flash of lightnin', an', while I war lookin' round to find the varlets, ole Bill struck out his hand, sayin':

"'This is a bad scrape, Dick, an' mebbe me an' you have done our last trappin' together. But we musn't get ketched if we can help it, 'cause we couldn't look fur nothin' but the stake.'

"While the ole man war speakin', I seed one of the rascals that had shot at us peepin' out from behind a log. He didn't show more'n two inches

of his head, but that war enough, an' I reckon that red-skin lay thar till his friends toted him off. Jest the minit I fired, ole Bill throwed down his furs, jumped to his feet, an' run, an' I done the same, although I did hate to leave that spelter that I had worked so hard fur all winter. But, in course, thar war no help fur it. Thar war plenty more beaver in the mountains, an', if I got safe off, I knowed whar to go to find 'em; but if I lost my scalp, I couldn't get another. So, as I war sayin', I put arter the ole man, an' jest then I heered something 'sides a arrer sing by my head. It war a bullet, an' the chap that sent it warn't sich a bad shot neither; fur, if I had the ole 'coon-skin cap I wore then, I could show you whar a piece of it war cut out. I didn't stop to look fur the feller, howsomever, but kept on arter ole Bill, loadin' my rifle as I ran. The woods war so thick we couldn't keep clost together, an' I soon lost sight of him; but that didn't skeer me, fur I knowed he could take keer of his own bacon. As fur myself, I never yet seed the Injun, or white man either, that could ketch me, if I onct got a leetle start of him; an' if all the Injuns in the mountains war *behind* me, I could laugh at 'em. But thar war some in front

of me, as I found out afore I had gone fur. I had jest got my rifle loaded, an' war settlin' down to my work—makin' purty good time, I reckon, the Injuns behind me yellin' an' hootin' all the while—when, all to onct, up jumped about a dozen more of the rascals.

"I didn't stop to ax no questions, but sent the nighest of 'em down in a hurry; but in a minit arterward I war down, too; an' when I war pulled to my pins ag'in, I war a pris'ner, my hands bein' bound behind me with hickory bark. It warn't a pleasant sight I seed, youngsters, as I stood thar, lookin' at them scowlin' Injuns. At that day thar war few of them Comanches that didn't know me an' ole Bill, an' when they seed who I war, they all set up a yell, an' began dancin' 'round me like mad, shakin' their tomahawks, an' pintin' their rifles an' arrers at me; an' one feller ketched me by the har, an' passed his knife 'round my head, as though he had half a notion to scalp me to onct. They kept goin' on in this way until all the Injuns in that part of the woods had come up to see what the fuss war 'bout; an' they, too, had to go through the same motions. All to onct they happened to think of ole Bill. The chief set up a

shout, an' all but four of the Injuns put off on his trail. It showed me, plain enough, that the rascals war afraid of me, when they left so many to guard me. But no four of them Comanches would have stopped me from gettin' away if I could have got my hands free. I tell you, I done my best, makin' that tough hickory bark crack an' snap, but it war no go—I war fast. As soon as the others war out of sight, one big feller ketched me by the har, an' begun to pull me t'wards the camp.

"He didn't help me along very easy, but dragged me over logs an' through bushes, as if he meant to pull my head off, while the other fellers, findin' nothin' else to do, follered behind with switches, that cut through my old huntin'-shirt like a knife. At last, arter they had got me purty well thrashed, we reached the camp, which war jest at the foot of the mountains—I'll show you the place in the mornin'—an' here they stood me up ag'in a post. Then I ketched it from every body—men, women, an' young ones. The most of the braves war still out arter the old man, an' I could easy tell by the way they whooped an' yelled that they hadn't ketched him. I knowed they wouldn't get him,

neither, unless they surrounded him like they did me.

"Wal, arter tormentin' me fur a long time, an' findin' that I didn't keer fur 'em, the Injuns finally let me alone; an' one ole dried-up squaw brought me a piece of buffaler meat. They wouldn't untie my hands, but that ole woman sot thar on the ground, an' fed me like I war a baby. I eat a heap of that meat, 'cause I war hungry, an' if I got a chance to have a race with the varlets, I didn't want to run on an empty stomach; 'sides I might have to go without eatin' fur two or three days afore I could find ole Bill. Jest afore dark the braves began to come in, one arter the other. They hadn't ketched the ole man, an' I could see, by the way they scowled at me, that I would have to stand punishment for his deeds, an' my own into the bargain. I could have yelled, when I knowed the old feller war safe, an' I made up my mind that if the Injuns would only give me half a chance, I'd soon be with him ag'in.

"Wal, when the chiefs come in, I war tied fast to the post, and left thar. They didn't try to skeer me any more, 'cause they seed it war no use, an' 'sides, they wanted to save all their spite fur

the mornin', fur it war too late to begin bisness that night. I war fast enough—as fast as if I had been wrapped up in chains—but them Injuns war afraid to trust me. They actooally kept half a dozen of their braves watchin' me, from the time it began to grow dark till daylight the next mornin'. I didn't sleep very easy, fur I war standin' ag'in that post, an' the bark they had tied me with war drawed so tight that it cut into my arms; but I made out to git a nap or two, an' when mornin' come, an' I had eat another big chunk of that buffaler meat, I war ready fur 'em to begin.

"As soon as the sun war up, the chief called a council. It did n't take 'em long to say what should be done with me, fur sooner than I had thought fur, one of the chiefs set up a yelp, which war answered by the hul tribe, an' men, women, an' children began formin' themselves into two lines, with whips, clubs, tomahawks, or whatever else they could ketch hold of; an' two fellers come up to set me free. I war to run the gauntlet. I tell you, youngsters, if thar is any thing that will make the har rise on a feller's head, it is fur him to stand an' look atween two lines sich as I saw that mornin'. It war n't the fust time I had been

in jest sich scrapes, an' I knowed, too, that the Injuns did n't mean to kill me then—they wanted to save me for the stake—but somehow I could n't help feelin' shaky. I did n't let the Injuns see it, howsomever, but tightened my belt, stretched my arms, an', 'walkin' out in front of the lines, waited fur the word to start. The head of the line war t'wards the camp, an' at the foot, which war t'wards this creek, stood five or six big fellers, waitin' to ketch me when I come out.

"Wal, it did n't take me long to see how the land lay, an' when the chief yelled to let me know that the time had come, I started. The way I traveled through 'em lines war a thing fur 'em Comanches to look at. I got plenty of clips as I passed, but this war the only one that hurt me."

As the trapper spoke, he bared his brawny shoulder, and showed the boys a long, ragged scar. The wound must have been a most severe one.

"That one," continued Dick, "war made by a tomahawk. It did n't hinder my runnin', howsomever, an' I war n't half a minit comin' to the end of 'em lines. But when I got thar I did n't stop. The Injuns that war waitin' thar, tried to ketch me, but I passed them like a streak of lightnin',

an' drawed a bee-line fur this ere crotch. In course the hul camp war arter me to onct; but I knowed that I war safe, fur all the Injuns war behind me, an' I would n't have been afraid to run a race with a noss. I did n't do as well as I had done afore, nor nigh as well as I could do now, fur I war stiff an' lame from bein' tied up so long; but I run plenty fast enough to git away. As I told you, I run through these willows, swam the creek—which war wide an' deep then, on 'count of the snow an' ice meltin'—then tuk to the mountains, an' started to make a circle round to the ole bar's hole. I traveled in every little stream I could find; walked on logs, an' on the second day, found ole Bill. The ole feller had been mighty down-hearted since I war ketched—fur the yells of the Injuns plainly told him what had become of me—an' had never expected to take me by the hand ag'in. But, when he seed me safe an' sound, he sot right down on the ground an' cried like a child.

"Wal, we lay 'round the ole bar's hole till the Injuns had gone, an' then set out fur the fort. We war on foot, an' had but one rifle atween us, but we got through all right, an' in less 'n a month, war on our way to the mountains ag'in."

CHAPTER VIII.

The "Ole Bar's Hole."

NEXT morning, after a hasty breakfast, the boys saddled their horses, and, led by the trapper, set out to find the wagon. Now it was that the latter showed the young hunters his extraordinary "travelin' qualities," as he expressed it; for as soon as the boys were in their saddles, he shouldered his rifle and started off, at a rapid pace, which he did not slacken at all until they arrived on the banks of a small stream, where they stopped to quench their thirst.

"Now, youngsters," said the trapper, seating himself on the ground, and wiping his forehead with his coat sleeve, "There's the place. The Comanche's camp war pitched jest in the edge of them ar' willows, an' right where you see them

bushes war where I stood afore I started to run the gauntlet. The chief's wigwam stood thar then. I tell you, it war n't healthy fur a feller to go foolin' 'round here them days."

The boys gazed long and earnestly at every object the trapper pointed out, and listened to his narration of the various incidents that had transpired during his captivity, until they almost fancied they could see the prairie covered with painted savages, and their guide, in the midst of his foes, awaiting the signal to begin his race for life Dick, himself, was no less interested, for he sat for a long time feasting his eyes on every familiar object; now and then casting suspicious glances toward the distant willows, as if he almost expected to catch a glimpse of a hostile warrior, or hear the war-whoop which had so often awoke the echoes of those very mountains.

"Wal, youngsters," said he, at length, "let 's be movin'! I never expected to see the time when I could travel over these ere prairies without bein' in danger of havin' my har raised; an' if you live to be as old as I am, you 'll see the day that 'em city chaps will ride through here on 'em steam railroads; an' if they see this place, they 'll never

dream that such things as I have told you about ever happened here."

The travelers again set out, Dick leading the way, at a still more rapid pace, and in two hours they arrived at the camp. Mr. Winters and old Bob were lying in the shade of the wagon, and as the boys approached, the former raised himself on his elbow, and inquired:

"Well, boys, how do you like traveling on your own hook? Do you think you could find your way to California without a guide?"

"Oh, they war all right!" exclaimed Dick, leaning his rifle against the wagon, and picking up the antelope skin which Archie had thrown down, and which contained some choice pieces of meat. "They war all right! Me and Useless found 'em down on Muddy Creek, Bob. They had killed this prong-horn, made their camp, an' war takin' matters easy like, as though they had never heered tell on a Comanche—the keerless fellers."

While Frank and Archie were unsaddling their horses, the trapper proceeded to recount their adventures, to which both Mr. Winters and old Bob listened attentively. The latter was not a little astonished to learn that the boys could so readily

accommodate themselves to circumstances, and was more firm than ever in his belief that "the youngsters would make good trappers."

Mr. Winters had, at first, been considerably alarmed at their absence; but, upon reflection, he remembered that the boys had often been in positions fully as dangerous, from which they had always succeeded in extricating themselves, and he soon fell in with the trapper's opinion, that they would "turn up all right." He did not think it necessary to caution them, for, from the description the trapper gave of their adventures, it was not at all probable that they would ever again be placed in a like situation.

After a hearty dinner, which Dick speedily served up, they again set out toward the mountains, which they reached about the middle of the afternoon. After riding along the edge of the willows, for half a mile, they came to a wide but very shallow stream, into which the trapper turned, and after following it for some distance, drove out on the bank and stopped.

"Here we are," said he, as he climbed down out of his wagon. "Now, youngsters, you 're at the ole bar's hole. But if you did n't know it war

here, you might hunt fur it till your har war whiter or Bob's, an' then you would n't find it, an' that would n't be no wonder neither; fur many a sharp-eyed Comanche has looked an' peeped fur it, but only one ever found it that I know of, an' it did n't do him no good, fur he never lived to tell of it."

While the trapper was speaking, old Bob had dismounted from his horse, and, walking up to a thicket of bushes which grew at the foot of a high rock that overhung the bed of the stream, began pulling them aside, and finally disclosed to view an opening that appeared to lead down into the very bowels of the earth. Meanwhile, Dick had gathered some dry wood for a torch, and, after lighting it, he backed down into the hole and disappeared, followed by Frank and Archie, who were impatient to see the inside of the cave which had so often served their guide as a secure retreat from his enemies. The passage was long and winding, and it was with considerable difficulty that the boys worked their way into it. Besides, it was in some places so narrow that they could scarcely squeeze themselves through it. The trapper, however, worked his way along with a celerity that was surprising, and soon both he and the torch were out of sight, and the

boys were left in pitch darkness. But there was little danger of their being lost in that narrow passage, and they crawled along as rapidly as possible, until at length Archie, who was leading the way, stopped, and began to rub his elbows and knees, which had received some pretty severe scratches from the sharp rocks.

"I say, Frank," he exclaimed, "how do you suppose Dick ever squeezed his broad shoulders through a narrow place like this? What's that?" he added, in a terrified voice, as they heard a savage growl, which seemed to sound directly over their heads.

Frank did not stop to answer, but throwing himself on his hands and knees, began to make the best of his way out of the passage, closely followed by his cousin, who urged him to go faster. They had not gone far when they were startled by the report of a rifle, which was followed by a roar that echoed and reëchoed through the cave like a heavy clap of thunder. What it was that had uttered that roar the boys were unable to determine; but they knew, by the report of the trapper's rifle, and the sounds of a fierce struggle that came faintly to their ears, that Dick had found his old harboring-

place occupied by some animal which did not feel disposed to give up possession; and they got out of the passage in much less time than it had taken them to get into it. When they reached the open air, the old trapper, who had heard the report of his "chum's" rifle, threw himself on his hands and knees, and crawled into the cave, followed by Mr. Winters. The boys at once ran to the wagon after their weapons, but by the time they had secured them, the fight was ended, and Dick made his appearance at the mouth of the passage. But he did not look like the man who had gone into that cave but a few moments before. His hunting-shirt and leggins were torn almost into shreds, his arms were bare to his shoulders, and were covered with wounds that were bleeding profusely. The boys were horrified; but their fears that the trapper had received serious injury were speedily set at rest, for he smiled as if nothing had happened, and exclaimed:

"Now you see what it is to be a trapper, youngsters. I shall allers think that 'ar cave has a good name, fur if me an' Useless did n't find the biggest grizzly bar in thar we ever sot eyes on, then thar aint no more beaver in the Missouri River."

As he spoke, he divested himself of what remained of his hunting-shirt, and walked down to the creek to wash the blood off his hands and face, in which he was assisted by Mr. Winters. While this was going on, old Bob crawled out of the cave, carrying two cubs in his arms, which he presented to the boys, saying:

"Them 's young grizzlies. They don't look now as if they would ever get to be as big and fierce as their mother war."

As the boys took them, they both set up a shrill cry, and fought most desperately for such small animals, and their sharp little claws left more than one mark upon the hands and faces of the young hunters.

"Keep an eye open, Bob," shouted Dick, who was seated on the ground, while Mr. Winters was bandaging his wounds. "Keep an' eye open, 'cause the old man of the family may be 'round."

Upon hearing this, Archie dropped his cub, and seizing his rifle, cast anxious glances upon the surrounding woods. But if the father was in the vicinity, he evidently thought it best to keep out of sight.

When Dick's wounds had been cared for, and he

had put on another suit of clothes, he seated himself on the ground, near the boys, while Bob kindled a fire and began preparations for supper.

"It aint allers fun to be a trapper, youngsters," said Dick, puffing away at his pipe, "'cause, afore a man can earn that name, he 's got to go through a heap of skrimmages, like the one I jest had. When I 'm on the prairy, or in the mountains, I allers keep my eyes open, an' the fust thing I seed as I crawled out of that passage into that ar' cave war that grizzly bar. She seed me, too, and set up a growl, as if to tell me that I could n't get away from thar any too quick; but she did n't wink more 'n twice afore I sent a chunk of lead into her. The light of the torch, however, bothered me, an' I did n't shoot atween her eyes, as I meant to; an' afore a feller could say 'Gin'ral Jackson,' she war comin' at me. Now, I 've been in jest such scrapes afore, an' the way I 've got pawed up, an' seed other fellers that were bigger and stronger than me, clawed an' torn, has showed me that no one man that ever lived is a match fur a full-grown grizzly; an' when I seed ole Bob poke his rifle out of the passage an' draw a bead on that bar's head, I 'll allow it made me feel a heap easier. If he had stayed away five

minits longer, I don't believe I'd ever showed you the way to Californy. As it war, I got pretty well clawed up."

This was the way the trapper described the fight in the cave, which was one of the most desperate he had ever engaged in, as the severe wounds he had received proved. But he looked upon such things as a matter of course. He expected to be engaged in many similar fights; always held himself in readiness for them, and when they were over, another notch was added to those on the handle of his knife (for Dick kept a strict account of the number of grizzlies he killed,) and he had another story to tell by the camp-fire.

After supper, the trappers procured torches, and, accompanied by Mr. Winters and the boys, proceeded to explore the cave. There, lying where she had fallen in defense of her young, was the grizzly, which was the first of these animals the boys had ever seen. As near as they could judge, she was fully twice the size and weight of the bear Frank had killed in the woods, and her claws, which she had used with such effect upon the trapper and his dog, (for, in defending his master, Useless had been most roughly handled,) measured eight inches in

length. Every thing in the cave bore evidence to the fact that the fight had been a severe one. The floor and walls were covered with blood, and on the bear's body were numerous wounds, made by the knife of the trapper, and the teeth of the faithful Useless.

After the boys had examined the bear to their satisfaction, old Bob began to remove the skin, while Dick pointed out other objects of interest in the cave. There were the withered hemlock boughs which had many a time served him and Bill Lawson for a bed, and under them was a hole about two feet square, which the trapper called his "pantry." He told Mr. Winters the story of the "struggle in the cave," and showed him the passage that led to the top of the hill where the Comanches had entered, and where he had for two days kept watch, awaiting the coming of old Bill.

They remained in the cave for an hour, listening to Dick's stories; for in his mind the "Ole Bar's Hole" was associated with many exciting events, and it was dark before they returned to the camp.

CHAPTER IX.

Archie's Adventure with a Grizzly.

N the following morning the boys, as usual, were up with the sun, impatient to try their skill on the big game, with which the woods abounded. The trapper, who, during his fight in the cave, had received wounds that would have prostrated an ordinary man, was already stirring, and, having attended to his mules, was moving about as lively as ever, preparing the morning meal. In a few moments their breakfast was cooked and eaten, and, after hanging their provisions on the trees, out of reach of any wild beast that might find his way into camp during their absence, they shouldered their rifles and followed the trappers into the forest. Here they divided into two parties, Mr. Winters going with old Bob, and the boys accompanying Dick.

"Now, youngsters," said the latter almost in a whisper, "we haint huntin' squirrels. We're arter bigger game. I don't s'pose you keer 'bout tacklin' a grizzly bar arter seein' me pawed up the way I war last night; so if you happen to come acrosst one of them varmints, you needn't mind shootin' at him. Thar's plenty other game, an' what we want to find now ar' a big-horn. That's an animal, I reckon, you never seed. Go easy, now, 'cause they've got ears like a painter's, an' noses sharper nor hounds."

So saying, the trapper led the way through a narrow ravine that lay between two mountains, whose tops seemed to pierce the clouds. The ravine, being thickly covered with bushes and logs, rendered their progress slow and tedious, and the boys, who could not help thinking what a fine hiding-place it would afford for a bear or panther, often cast uneasy glances about them, and kept as close to the trapper as possible. After they had gone about half a mile, the latter suddenly stopped and said:

"If these yere trees could talk, a'most every one of 'em would have a story to tell you 'bout me an' ole Bill Lawson, 'cause we've often come through

this gully when it war chuck full of Comanches. You 'member I onct told you 'bout waitin' at the ole bar's hole fur him, an' that the ole feller had hid the black mustang in the bushes! Wal, here 's the very spot."

As the trapper spoke, he pushed his way into a dense thicket, and showed the boys the sapling to which the old man had tied the horse.

"Wal, that ar' animal," continued Dick, "stood here fur two hours quiet an' still as a mouse, an' we tuk him out an' got safe off without the varlets bein' the wiser fur it. All the way through here we could hear 'em talkin' to each other, an'—Look thar, youngsters, quick!"

Before the boys could look up to see what had attracted the trapper's attention, the sharp report of his rifle rung through the gully, and a queer-looking animal come tumbling down the mountain, landing almost at their feet. Far up above the tree tops they saw the remainder of the flock bound over the rocks and disappear.

"That 's a sheep," said the trapper, hastily reloading his rifle. "He 'll make a fust rate dinner, an', if we keep our eyes open, we may get another."

The game did bear a close resemblance to sheep, the only difference being his enormous horns, which looked altogether too large and heavy for so small an animal to carry. But the trapper did not allow them to closely examine their prize, for he exclaimed:

"If we want more of 'em fellers, we must n't waste no time. But, fust, we must separate, 'cause the further apart we get, the more likely we are to have a shot at 'em. Are you afraid to stay here, little un?"

"Of course not," replied Archie, quickly.

"Wal, then, keep your eyes up the mountain, an' if you see 'em ag'in, blaze away. Come on, Frank. I'll show you whar to stand."

The latter moved off with Dick, and Archie was left to himself. After examining the game to his satisfaction, he took up a position where he could obtain a good view of the side of the mountain, leaned back against a tree, and impatiently waited for the re-appearance of the big-horns. In front of him ran a deer path, hard and well-beaten as any road. It was, no doubt, used as a highway by animals traveling through the ravine; and Archie now and then directed his gaze up and down the

path, in hopes he might discover some game in that direction.

He had remained in this position for nearly half an hour, when he *did* see an animal coming leisurely down the path, about fifty yards from him It was an enormous grizzly bear. It did not appear to have determined upon any thing in particular, for it approached very slowly, stopping every few feet to snuff the air, and finally seated itself on its haunches, and proceeded to wash its paws and face, after the manner of a house cat. Archie had a good view of it. It was nearly as large as the one the trapper had killed in the cave, and the sight of its powerful claws, and the frightful array of teeth it exhibited, made the young hunter shudder. He had not been expecting so formidable a visitor, and to say that he was frightened would but feebly express his feelings. He had presence of mind enough, however, to move behind his tree, out of sight; but still he could not remove his eyes from the animal, neither could he determine upon any plan to extricate himself from his unpleasant situation. The grizzly had not yet discovered him, and Archie had his wits about him sufficiently to note the fact, that what little wind there was, was

blowing from the bear toward himself. For fully five minutes—it seemed much longer to Archie—the grizzly sat in the path, sometimes looking lazily about him, and then licking his jaws like a dog that had just enjoyed a good meal; and for the same length of time did the young hunter remain behind his tree watching his movements, and wondering what course he could pursue to rid himself of his dangerous neighbor. It was not at all probable that the bear would remain in that position until the trapper returned. What if he should take it into his head to come further down the path? Archie would certainly be discovered, for the path run close by the tree, behind which he was concealed, and what would the bear do then? It was something he did not like to think about. He knew, from what he had heard the trapper say, that the grizzly's disposition is very different from that of the black bear. The latter, unless rendered desperate by hunger, will generally take to his heels at the sight of a human being; but the grizzly looks upon all who invade his dominions as enemies, and believes in punishing them accordingly.

These thoughts passed rapidly through Archie's mind, and in a moment more his resolve was taken.

Keeping his eyes fastened on the bear, he cautiously raised his hand above his head, and, to his joy, found that he could easily reach the lowest limbs of the tree, and that they were strong enough to sustain his weight. But it was not his intention to leave the grizzly in peaceable possession of the field; for, as soon as he had satisfied himself that he had found a way of escape, he cocked his rifle and cautiously raised it to his shoulder. He was trembling violently, but at length he succeeded in quieting his nerves sufficiently to cover the bear's head with the sight and pull the trigger. The grizzly, however, arose to his feet just as Archie fired, and the ball, instead of finding a lodgment in his brain, entered his shoulder. It brought him to the ground, and Archie caught one glimpse of him struggling in the path, and heard his growls of rage and pain, as he dropped his rifle and swung himself into the lowest branches of the tree.

It was evident that the bear meant to take ample revenge on him, for Archie heard him coming up the path. But he knew that the grizzly could not climb, and, after settling himself among the branches, he looked down at his enemy in perfect security. The bear knew where he had gone, for

he ran directly to the foot of the tree, and, after smelling at the rifle and pawing it out of his way, he began walking up and down the path, all the while uttering those terrific growls, that made the young hunter tremble.

At this moment Archie heard the report of a rifle far up the mountain, which was quickly followed by another that sounded nearer. Then came a crashing in the bushes, as the big-horns fled before the hunters, and Archie heard his companions shouting to him:

"Look out, down there," said Frank; "they're running directly toward you, Archie."

"Keep your eyes open, youngster," chimed in Dick. "Don't let 'em go by you."

But Archie was not in a situation to intercept them, and he heard the big-horns dash across the ravine and bound up the mountain on the opposite side, closely followed by the dog, which barked fierce and loud at every jump.

"Archie, why don't you shoot?" again shouted Frank, his voice sounding as though he was coming down the mountain.

"I can't," answered Archie. "Look out! Don't come down here. I'm treed by a grizzly."

"By a grizzly?" repeated Frank, in astonishment. "Has he hurt you?"

"No," shouted Archie, from his tree, "I am all right; but I hurt him, I guess. Look out, Frank! he's going toward you."

This was a fact. The grizzly had stood perfectly still under the tree, listening to the sounds of the chase, until, finding that he could not reach Archie, he determined to revenge himself upon some one else. He had not gone far before Useless, having overtaken and killed a big-horn that his master had wounded, came up, and, discovering the grizzly, instantly gave chase. The bear, maddened by the pain of his wound, advanced with open mouth to meet him; but the dog, easily eluding his attacks, kept him busy until the trapper arrived, and put an end to the fight by shooting the bear through the head. Archie had watched the struggle from his perch, and, seeing that the grizzly was dead, he came down out of his tree, feeling very much relieved.

"You keerless feller!" exclaimed the trapper, "did n't I tell you not to mind shootin' at a grizzly bar?"

By this time Frank had come up with a big-horn

on his shoulder, and, after having regained his rifle, Archie gave them an account of what had transpired.

"Wal," said the trapper, "it war keerless to go a foolin' with a bar that ar' way. Now, you stay here, an' I'll go an' get that big-horn that Useless killed."

The dog, as if understanding what was said, led his master to the place where he had left the game. When the trapper returned, he removed the skin of the grizzly, intending to cure it, and give it to Archie to remember his "keerlessness by," as he said. After which, they shouldered their game and returned to camp.

CHAPTER X.

Hanging a Bear.

WHEN they arrived at the wagon, they found Mr. Winters and old Bob eating their dinner. Although not as fortunate as Dick's party, they had not returned empty-handed, for the old trapper had killed a big-horn, and Mr. Winters had knocked over a large gray wolf. Thinking that Frank might want the skin of the latter to mount in his museum, he had taken it off very carefully, and stretched it on a frame to dry.

Archie's adventure with the grizzly was duly discussed, and, for an hour after dinner, the boys sat by the fire listening to the trapper's stories. But they could not long endure this inactivity—there was "no fun in it," as Archie said—so they saddled their horses and set out for a ride over the

prairie. They were not after game this time. If they had been, it is not at all probable they would have discovered any, for they raced their horses over the swells, and shouted loud enough to frighten all the animals for a mile around. About the middle of the afternoon they grew tired of their ride, and turned their horses toward the camp. As they rode slowly along, about half a mile from the willows that skirted the base of the mountains, Archie, who, as usual, was leading the way, suddenly drew up his horse, exclaiming:

"See there, Frank! There 's another of the varmints!"

Frank looked toward the willows, and saw a large, grizzly bear, seated on his haunches, regarding them as if not at all concerned about their approach.

"We 're safe now, Archie," said he, as soon as he had satisfied himself that the bear had not the slightest intention of seeking safety in flight. "A grizzly can't outrun a horse, so let 's shoot at that fellow."

"I—I—believe I 'd rather not meddle with him," answered his cousin, shrugging his shoulders. "I say, let him alone if he let 's us alone. What

if our horses should get frightened and throw us? Would n't we be in a fix? But I 'll shoot at him from here."

"Why, it 's too far," said Frank. "I am going up nearer." As he spoke, he put his horse into a gallop and rode toward the bear, which was still seated in the edge of the willows. Archie did not at all like the idea of provoking a fight with the animal; but, after a moment's hesitation, he followed his cousin. There might be no danger after all, he thought, for that bear certainly could not catch Sleepy Sam. The grizzly still kept his seat, closely watching the movements of the hunters, and once or twice he seemed inclined to advance on them; but, after walking a few steps, he again seated himself, as if to await their approach.

The boys had gone but a short distance, when their horses discovered the animal, and Pete at once stopped, and refused to go any further. He had evidently had some experience in bear hunting, for the sight of the animal seemed to terrify him. Words had more effect than the spurs, for when Frank spoke encouragingly to him, he would advance a few steps, and then, as if suddenly recalling his former experience, he would hastily

retreat. In this way, he succeeded in getting further and further away from the bear, instead of going toward it. Archie now took the lead, in hopes that his cousin could induce his horse to follow the old buffalo hunter; but Pete utterly refused to go any nearer, and Frank at length dismounted and prepared to risk a shot at the bear at long range. The animal accepted this as a challenge, for he arose to his feet, growling savagely, and made toward the boys at a rate of speed that astonished them.

When Frank dismounted, he was careful to retain a firm hold of Pete's bridle, for the actions of the horse plainly indicated that, if left to himself, he would take to his heels, and get as far as possible away from the dangerous neighborhood. When he saw that the bear was coming toward him, he snorted and plunged, rendering it impossible for Frank to shoot; and, in fact, the latter had no desire to do so, when he found that the grizzly was about to assume the offensive. His first thought was to remount; but the horse was so terrified that he would not stand still long enough for Frank to place his foot in the stirrup.

"Hurry up, there!" exclaimed Archie, excitedly.

"The rascal is coming fast. He means fight, sure enough."

Pete evidently thought so too, for he reared and plunged worse than ever, pulling Frank about over the prairie in spite of all he could do. Suddenly there was a loud snap, and the bridle, broken close to the bit, was violently pulled through Frank's hand. The next moment Pete had disappeared behind a swell. For an instant the cousins gazed at each other in dismay. On foot, Frank could not hope to escape from the bear, which, in spite of his clumsy appearance, was making his way toward them with surprising rapidity; neither could he disable him by a shot from his rifle. Before, he had been as cool and collected as he possibly could be, for he knew that he had a way of escape. But Pete seemed to have carried the last particle of his master's courage away with him, for Frank's hand trembled so violently that he knew it would be useless to fire at the bear. But still there was a chance for escape, and Archie was the first to think of it.

"Frank!" he exclaimed, "there 's only one way now—jump up behind me."

His cousin was prompt to act upon the sugges-

tion, and Sleepy Sam, in answer to a thrust from his master's spurs, carried them both toward the camp at a rapid gallop.

They no longer thought of fighting the grizzly; their only desire was to reach the old bear's hole as soon as possible, and procure the assistance of the trappers. They both thought that the animal would soon abandon the chase, and their only fear was, that before they could reach the camp and acquaint Dick with what had transpired, the bear would be safe among the mountains. But they soon discovered their mistake. The grizzly steadily followed them, and, although Sleepy Sam made excellent time for a horse encumbered with a double load, gained at every step. But they were rapidly nearing the old bear's hole, and, at length, the boys saw their uncle and the trappers ride out of the willows. Dick was mounted on Frank's horse. The animal, when he found himself at liberty, had made straight for camp, and his appearance there, without his rider, occasioned no little surprise and alarm. Dick, as usual, predicted that "Frank war n't a bit hurt. He would be sartin to turn up all right." But still he did not know but the young hunter had got himself into "some

scrape," in which he would need assistance, and agreed with Mr. Winters that it would be best to hunt him up. The latter was fast falling in with the trapper's opinion, that his nephews were "'bout the keerlessest chaps agoin';" and although he knew that they always succeeded in bringing themselves "safe out of all their scrapes," he felt considerably relieved, when he saw that Sleepy Sam had carried them out of reach of the claws of the grizzly.

Archie, when he found that assistance was at hand, stopped and faced the bear, intending to try a shot at him. But the trappers galloped toward them, Dick shouting, "Hold on thar, you keerless feller; me an' Bob 'll take him off your hands. We 'll show you how they hunt bars in Mexico. We 'll hang the varmint."

The trapper swung a lasso above his head, as he spoke, and brought it down across Pete's sides, in a way that made the spirited animal prance in the most lively manner. The horse was still unwilling to approach the bear; but he knew full well that he carried a rider who was able to enforce obedience.

The grizzly stopped for a moment when he saw

these new enemies approaching, then he rushed toward old Bob, who was in advance of his companion. But he was met by the trapper's dog, which attacked him with such fury that the bear was obliged to stop and defend himself. Old Bob rode in a circle around the combatants, holding his lasso in his hand all ready for a throw, and yelling with all the strength of his lungs to encourage the dog. Dick was making desperate efforts to join his companion, but his horse stopped about a hundred yards from the bear, and stubbornly refused to go nearer. His rider, resolved to have his own way, beat him most unmercifully with his lasso, and, as the horse appeared to be equally determined, the boys were unable to decide how the battle would end. All this while Useless had kept up the contest with the bear, and the animal finding that he could not elude his attacks, rose on his haunches and struck at the dog with his paws. Old Bob had been waiting for this. Swinging his lasso around his head, he launched it at the bear, and as the noose settled down about his neck, he turned his horse and galloped off. The next moment there was a heavy thud, a smothered growl of rage, and the grizzly was prostrate on the prairie

He, however, quickly regained his feet, and, disregarding the attacks of the dog, rushed with open mouth toward old Bob. Now was the time for Dick. Having, at last, been whipped into obedience, Pete gamely approached the bear, and, in an instant more, grizzly was powerless. Dick was on one side of him, old Bob on the other; and their lassos were drawn so taut he could not turn either way. If he attempted to attack Bob, he was checked by Dick; and if he rushed upon the latter, old Bob's lasso stopped him. The grizzly's struggles were desperate; his growls terrific. He tore at the lassos with his claws, and exerted all his tremendous strength to break the raw-hide ropes, which were drawn as tight as a bow-string. But the conflict, desperate as it was, lasted only a short time. The grizzly's struggles grew weaker, his growls fainter, and finally he sank on the prairie dead. The trappers slackened up their lassos, and Mr. Winters and the boys, who had closely watched this singular contest, rode up to examine their prize.

"Thar 's your bar, you keerless fellers," said Dick. "If you don't let these yere varmints alone, you 'll git yourselves in a bad scrape, one of these days, now, I tell you A grizzly don't

wait fur a feller to walk up an' shake his fist in his face, an' say, 'Do ye want to fight?' He b'lieves in makin' war on every one he sees."

"We know that!" replied Archie. "This fellow made at us before we got near enough to shoot at him."

"Then you did mean to fight him, did you?" asked the trapper, as he and old Bob began to skin the bear. "Wal, it aint every feller that would keer 'bout meddlin' with a grizzly so long as the critter let him alone. I've seed trappers—an' brave ones, too—that would shoulder their we'pons an' walk off if they happened to come acrost a bar. It aint allers fun to hang a grizzly, neither; fur if your hoss falls down, or your lasso breaks, you 're a'most sartin to go under. I've seed more 'n one poor chap pawed up 'cause his hoss war n't quick enough to git out of the varmint's reach."

In this way the trapper talked to the boys until the skin of the grizzly was taken off, when the travelers returned to their camp. As Archie remarked, it had been "a great day for bears," and the evening was appropriately passed in listening to the stories the trappers related of their adventures with these animals.

CHAPTER XI.

A Buffalo Hunt.

THE next morning, after breakfast, the boys seated themselves by the fire, and while Frank mended his bridle, which Pete had broken the day before, Archie was endeavoring to conjure up some plan for the day's amusement. Even in that country, which abounded with game, the boys were at a loss how to pass the time, for the grizzlies had interfered with their arrangements considerably. If they went hunting in the mountains, they might come across another bear; and their recent experience with those animals had shown them that the hunters were sometimes the hunted. They had no desire for further adventures with the monsters, and they had at last decided that they would take a gallop over the prairie, when they were startled by the clatter of horses'

hoofs in the creek, and old Bob—who, at daylight, had started out on a "prospecting" expedition—galloped into camp, breathless and excited. The boys very naturally cast their eyes toward the prairie, to see if he were not followed by a grizzly; but the sight of one of those animals never affected the old trapper in that manner. He had seen what he considered larger and more profitable game.

"Dick," he exclaimed, drawing up his horse with a sudden jerk—"Dick, have some buffaler hump for dinner?"

"Sartin," replied the trapper, hastily rising to his feet, and throwing away his pipe. "In course. Saddle up to onct, youngsters. We'll have some game now as is game."

The announcement that there is a herd of buffaloes in the vicinity, always creates an uproar in a hunter's camp, and there was no exception to the rule this time. The boys had never seen the trapper so eager; and even Mr. Winters, generally so cool and deliberate, was not so long in saddling his horse as usual. This, of course, had an effect upon the boys; but, as is always the case, their hurry occasioned them a considerable loss of time. Archie could not find his bridle, and Frank, in his

eagerness, broke his saddle-girth; and, to increase their excitement, the others, as soon as they had saddled their horses (Dick rode one of the mules) and secured their weapons, rode off, leaving them alone. Archie, after a lengthy search, found his bridle in the wagon, and Frank at last succeeded in mending his saddle-girth with a piece of buck-skin. The boys' rifles stood together against a tree, close by, with all the accouterments hanging to the muzzles. Frank's being a common "patch" rifle, he, of course, had a powder-horn and bullet pouch, while Archie carried the ammunition for his breech-loader in a haversack. The latter was ready first, and hastily seizing the gun that came first to his hand, secured Frank's instead of his own, and, putting his horse into a gallop, rode down the bed of the creek, throwing the powder-horn and bullet pouch over his shoulder as he went. Frank was ready a moment afterward, and finding his own rifle gone, he, of course, took Archie's. Although he thought nothing of it at the time, he afterward looked upon it as a lucky circumstance. In addition to their rifles, the boys each had two revolvers, which they carried in their holsters. Frank overtook the hunters at the edge of the prairie,

where they had stopped to wait for him, and to hold a consultation. The high swells that rose in every direction shut them out from the view of the game, but old Bob knew exactly where to go to find it. As they went along, at an easy gallop, Dick rode up beside the boys, and, addressing himself to Frank, said:

"Now, youngster, this 'll be new bisness to you, so don't be keerless. You must 'member that your hoss ar' as green as a punkin in buffaler huntin', an', if you let him get stampeded, he 'll take you cl'ar to Mexico afore he stops."

"Stampeded!" repeated Frank. "Does a horse ever get stampeded with buffaloes?"

"Sartin he do," answered the trapper, with a laugh; "an' if you ever get teetotally surrounded by a thousand bellerin', pitchin' buffalers, you 'll say it 's the wust scrape you ever war in. So don't go too clost to 'em. If your hoss gets frightened, stop him to onct, and quit follerin' 'em."

Dick was then proceeding to instruct the boys in the manner of hunting the buffaloes, when old Bob, who had been leading the way, suddenly came to a halt.

"They 're jest behind that swell," said he.

"Don't you hear 'em? Now, we must separate." Then, in hurried whispers, he pointed out the station he wished each to occupy, and, after Dick had again cautioned Frank to keep his horse completely under his control, the boys rode away in different directions.

When Frank reached his station, he stopped his horse, examined his rifle, opened his holsters, so that he could readily draw his revolvers, and waited impatiently for the signal. The hunters were stationed about a quarter of a mile apart. Old Bob was in the center of the line. After satisfying himself that they were all in their places, he waved his hat—the signal for the advance. They all started at the same moment, and, before Frank could think twice, his horse had carried him to the top of the swell, and he was in full view of the game. The sight that met his eyes astonished him.

He had often read of the prairie being black with buffaloes, but he had never seen it before. The herd was an immense one, and stretched away in all directions as far as his eye could reach. But he was allowed no time for admiration, for, the moment the hunters made their appearance, the

buffaloes discovered them, and made off at the top of their speed, the noise of their hoofs sounding on the hard prairie like the rolling of thunder. Pete was not afraid of buffaloes, and he soon carried his master within easy range of the herd, the nearest of which fell at the crack of his rifle. Too impatient to reload his gun, Frank drew one of his revolvers, and, forgetting, in his excitement, all the trapper's advice, spurred after the flying herd; and, so close was he to them, that he seldom missed his mark. When he had fired all the charges, he returned his empty weapon to his holster, and, as he drew the other, he cast his eye in the direction of his companions, and was a good deal surprised to discover that some of the herd had got between him and the rest of his party, and were running almost side by side with him. On the outer edge of the herd, he saw his cousin in company with the trappers. Archie had, doubtless, emptied all his weapons, for he appeared to be engaged in reloading. Further back, he saw Mr. Winters, who had stopped to "settle" a large bull he had wounded. He also noticed that the mule, on which Dick was mounted, being entirely unaccustomed to such business, and frightened by the

discharges of the fire-arms, and the noise of the rushing herd, was making desperate but unsuccessful attempts to throw his rider. Frank, taking this all in at a glance, then turned his attention to the animals nearest him, and soon emptied his second revolver.

All this while Pete had been running with the bridle hanging loose on his neck; now, as Frank gathered up the reins, he noticed, for the first time, that he was going at a rate of speed he had never before accomplished. This, however, did not alarm him; but, seeing that he was leaving his companions behind, he thought he would slacken his pace and wait for them to come up. He drew in the reins, but it had no effect on the horse, which, looking back over his shoulder, as if frightened at something that was pursuing him, bounded off faster than ever. Taking a firmer hold of the reins, Frank pulled again with all his strength, but to no purpose. Had he been at sea, in an open boat, without rudder, sails, or oars, he could not have been more helpless than he was at that moment. His horse, perfectly unmanageable, was running away with him! In an instant, the thought flashed through Frank's mind, that he was

in the very position the trapper had so emphatically cautioned him to avoid. But still he was not frightened, until he cast his eyes behind him, and, to his utter dismay, discovered that the herd had closed in on all sides of him. Around his horse was a clear space of perhaps a hundred yards in diameter, which was slowly but surely growing smaller, as the frightened animals pressed and crowded against each other. On every side he saw a mass of horns, and tails, and shaggy shoulders, which, like a wall, shut him away from his companions. Away off to the right, he saw the trappers, Archie, and Mr. Winters, no longer pursuing the game, but gazing after him, and throwing their arms wildly about. If they shouted, Frank did not hear what they said, for the noise of that multitude of hoofs would have drowned the roar of Niagara. They could not assist him, neither could he help himself. That very morning the trapper had told him of seeing a man trampled to death by a herd of buffaloes, and now a similar fate was in store for himself. The appalling thought seemed to deprive him of the last particle of strength, for he reeled in his saddle, and only caught the mane of his horse just in time to save himself from fall-

ing to the ground. But, as was always the case with Frank, when placed in situations of extreme danger, this burst of weakness quickly passed. While he had life, he could not relinquish all hope of being able to bring himself safely out of even this, the most perilous position in which he had ever found himself. He could determine upon no particular plan for escape, so long as he was surrounded by those frantic buffaloes. The only course he could pursue was to compel Pete to keep pace with the herd. But this plan did not place him out of the reach of danger. He knew that buffaloes, when stampeded, turn aside for nothing. Neither hills nor rivers check their mad flight, and any living thing that stands in their way is trampled to death. Even the exhausted members of the herd, unable to keep pace with the others, are borne down and crushed to a jelly. They neither seem to hear or see any thing; all their senses being merged into the desire to get as far as possible from the object that has excited their alarm; and they seldom stop until completely exhausted.

Frank knew this, and the question that arose in his mind was, "How long could his horse stand

that rapid gallop?" He appeared to be as thoroughly frightened as the buffaloes, and it was not at all probable he would show any inclination to stop, so long as he saw that shaggy mass behind him, or could hear the noise of their hoofs, which sounded like the rumbling of an immense cataract. The more he thought of his critical situation, the firmer was his belief that there was but one way open to him, and that was to keep ahead of the animals, which were behind him. Having determined upon this, he again cast his eyes toward the place where he had last seen his friends. They were gone, and Frank was alone in the midst of that multitude of frantic buffaloes.

When the trappers had discovered Frank's situation, they knew it was out of their power to assist him. After following him a short distance, in the vain hope of making him hear the words of advice and encouragement which they sent after him with all the strength of their lungs, they had fallen back out of sight. Dick had advised this course, "Fur," said he, "the longer we foller 'em, the faster they'll run. They won't stop till they're clean gin out. If the youngster stays on his hoss, an' keeps

ahead of 'em till they're a leetle over their fright, he's all right."

Dick, however, did not intend to leave his young companion altogether. At his request, Archie gave up Sleepy Sam to him, and, after assuring the others, who were in a state of intense excitement and alarm, that he would certainly find Frank and bring him back safe, he rode off in the direction the buffaloes had gone, while the rest of the party returned to collect their game.

Meanwhile, Pete, rendered frantic by the deafening noice, was carrying Frank over the prairie at a terrific pace. The young hunter's alarm had somewhat abated, and he appeared as calm as though he was merely taking a ride for amusement; but his mind was exceedingly busy, and, in a very short space of time, he lived over his whole life. He cast frequent and anxious glances behind him, but could see no change for the better in his situation. The buffaloes, as far as his eye could reach, pushed and crowded against each other, apparently as frightened as ever, but taking no notice whatever of the horseman in their midst. The space around his horse was gradually growing smaller, which

made Frank shudder when he thought what the result would be if they should close in upon him.

One hour passed, and still the frightened herd dashed on, with the frantic horse and his helpless rider in their midst, without, in the least, slackening their pace. Pete was evidently in distress. That mad gallop was telling on him severely; but, while those buffaloes were behind him, all attempts to stop him would have been useless. Another hour glided by, and, to his joy, Frank discovered that the animals behind him were scattering, and that the line of his pursuers was growing thinner. Those in front still ran as fast as ever—no doubt, pushed onward by those behind them, while those in the extreme rear were evidently getting over their fright. Frank looked again and again, to satisfy himself that he was not mistaken, and he was confident that, if his horse could hold out half an hour longer, the buffaloes, slowly dividing right and left, would leave a way of escape open to him. The minutes seemed lengthened into hours; but his pursuers were now rapidly taking up their places on the flanks of the herd, and, in a short time, not a buffalo was to be seen behind him.

Again Frank pulled the reins, and Pete, almost

exhausted, and no longer hearing that terrific noise behind him, willingly stopped. Frank, filled with gratitude for his escape, threw himself from the saddle, just as the last of the buffaloes were disappearing over a neighboring swell.

CHAPTER XII.

A Night among the Wolves.

IT would be impossible to describe Frank's feelings, as he stood there, holding his panting, reeking horse, and listening to that rumbling sound, which grew fainter and fainter, as the buffaloes dashed on their way. Now that the danger of being trampled to death was passed, he did not stop to think of what was still before him. He cared not that he was forty miles from the old bear's hole, and that, in three hours, the sun would be down, and he compelled to pass the night alone on the prairie. All thoughts of what he knew he must endure before he reached the camp were swallowed up in thankfulness that he had been able to bring himself safely out of the most dangerous position in which he had ever been placed.

In a few moments the last of the buffaloes had passed out of hearing, and Frank then turned his attention to his horse.

Pete looked very unlike the sleek, spirited animal of which he had been so proud. He was reeking with sweat, panting loudly, and was evidently very nearly exhausted. Had he been obliged to carry his rider a few miles further, Frank might have been compelled to find his way back to camp on foot. Pete was also very much in need of water; and now that the danger was over, Frank found that he, too, was very thirsty. During his excitement and alarm he had not thought of it; but now that he was able to think calmly, he decided that his first care should be to find a stream of water, where he might quench his thirst.

After reloading his rifle and revolvers, he again took Pete by the bridle and led him in the direction of the mountains, which, as near as he could judge, were twenty miles distant. Although he was most anxious to reach them before night, in hopes that he might find the trapper, (for he knew that Dick would not rest easy until he had found him,) he could not bear the thought of riding his horse while he was in such distress.

At length he reached the top of a swell, when he paused to look about him. On his right hand, about a mile distant, as he judged, he saw a long line of willows, which (so the trappers had told him) were a sure sign of water. Toward the willows, then, he directed his course, in hopes that his horse, when he had quenched his thirst and eaten a few mouthfuls of grass, would be in a condition to travel. But he soon found that it was more than a mile to the willows—it was five times that distance—and it was about an hour before sunset when Frank reached the stream, and, kneeling down on the bank, took a long, refreshing drink. Here he had a most lively battle with Pete. The horse was stubborn, and when he had determined upon a course, it required considerable persuasion to induce him to abandon it. He wanted to drink his fill of the water at once, to which Frank objected; and it was not until Pete had received several severe blows from a branch that his master cut from one of the willows, that he allowed himself to be led out of the stream. Frank then tied him to a tree, removed the saddle, and threw himself on the ground to determine upon his future movements. He was tired and

hungry; he did not like the idea of camping on the prairie alone, but he could see no way to avoid it. Then he thought of the trapper, and walked out on the prairie to look for him. But Dick was nowhere to be seen. Had Frank remained where he had escaped from the buffaloes, he would then have been in the company of his friend, for the trapper was at that moment standing on the top of the very swell, where Frank had stood when he first discovered the willows. Useless sat by his side, looking up into his master's face, and whining as if he, too, wondered what had become of the object of their search. Seeing no signs of Frank, Dick concluded that he was still among the buffaloes, so he kept on after them, now and then shaking his head and muttering—"The keerless feller. It beats all natur' how that hoss of his 'n traveled." But Frank did not know that Dick was so near him, and, after waiting nearly an hour for him to make his appearance, he returned to the willows, and sat about making his preparations for the night. He first selected a suitable spot for a camp, and, after gathering a few dry branches and lighting a fire with a flint and steel he found in Archie's haversack, he took his

rifle and walked along the bank of the creek to find something for his supper. He generally took great pleasure in a hunt, but there was no sport in this one, for he could not help thinking of his recent adventure with the grizzly. What if he should meet one of those animals? He could not hope for assistance from the trapper. He had no one to depend upon but himself. He had always had great confidence in his skill as a marksman, but he had never wished for an opportunity to try it on a grizzly bear. If there were any of those animals among the willows, he did not encounter them, and, in fact, the woods did not appear to abound in game of any kind. The only living thing he discovered was a raccoon crossing the creek on a log just ahead of him.

Frank, knowing that he was working for his supper, made a good shot, and when he shouldered the 'coon and started for his camp, he felt relieved to know that he was not compelled to pass the night hungry. He had often heard that the flesh of the 'coon was excellent, and he found it was so; whether it was because he was hungry, or because the meat was really good, he could not decide; but at any rate, he ate nearly half the 'coon, and

hung the remainder upon a limb to save it for his breakfast. Then, after gathering a supply of firewood, sufficient to last all night, he again walked out on the prairie to look for the trapper. But he was not in sight; and when it began to grow dark, Frank returned to his camp, feeling rather lonesome. After he had hobbled Pete, (which he did by tying one end of his halter around his neck, and the other to one of his fore legs,) and turned him loose to graze, he seated himself by the fire, and heartily wished it was morning.

There was nothing pleasant in the thought that he was obliged to pass the night alone. He had often camped out, but he was not accustomed to living in such a wilderness. Had Dick been with him, he would have slept as soundly as he ever did at home; but, as it was, there was no probability of his enjoying a good night's rest. It grew dark rapidly, and the prairie, so deserted and still in the day-time, now seemed to be crowded with wolves. He had heard them every night since he had been on the plains, but he had never listened to such a chorus as saluted his ears that evening. The fact was, they had been attracted by a buffalo that lay but a short distance from Frank's camp. It had

been wounded by the hunters in the morning, and, becoming separated from the herd, had come to the creek for water, and died. Frank knew that the wolves had found something, for he could hear them growling and fighting over their meal. Suddenly they all set up a howl, and took to their heels. They did not go far, however, but appeared to be running in circles about their prey, as if they had been driven away by some larger animal. Frank was not pleased with his neighbors, and did not feel at all inclined to go to sleep. He sat before his fire, with his rifle across his knees, and his revolvers close at hand, sincerely hoping that the wolves would not approach his camp. For two hours he remained in this position, and finally, becoming more accustomed to the howls of the wolves, he leaned against a tree, and was fast losing all consciousness of what was going on around him, when he was aroused by his horse, which came snorting through the willows, and did not stop until he had placed himself close to his master for protection. This alarmed Frank, who, remembering how Pete had acted the day before, was certain that there was a grizzly bear prowling about his camp; and, fearful that his horse, if left to him-

self, would run away, he slipped the bridle over his head, and tied him securely to a tree. While thus engaged, he heard a slight noise in the bushes, as if some heavy animal was endeavoring to pass carefully through them. This continued for half an hour, during which the animal, whatever it was, walked entirely around his camp. This tried Frank's nerves severely. To sit there, in those woods, and listen to some animal walking about, perhaps watching for an opportunity to spring upon him, was almost as bad as facing a grizzly. Again and again the animal made the circuit of the camp, and presently Frank saw a pair of eyes, that looked like two coals of fire, glaring at him through the darkness. Should he fire at the animal? If it was a grizzly, and the wound should not prove fatal, his life would not be worth a moment's purchase. There might be bushes between him and the beast, that would glance the ball, or his hand might prove unsteady. It was a risk he did not like to take; but he could try the effect of fire on him. So, catching up a brand, he threw it at the eyes, which instantly disappeared.

During the livelong night did Frank sit by the fire, holding his rifle in his hands, now and then

caressing his horse, which stood close beside him, trembling with fear; while, at regular intervals, he heard a rustling in the willows, which told him that his enemy was still on the watch.

But all things have an end. At length, to Frank's immense relief, day began to dawn. As soon as he could distinctly discern the nearest objects, he again hobbled his horse, and, after turning him loose to graze, began to prepare his breakfast. After he had cooked and eaten the last vestige of the 'coon, he saddled Pete, and, turning his back upon the place where he had passed a most uncomfortable night, set out toward the mountains.

About the same hour, the trapper arose from the prairie, where he had made his camp, and where he had slept soundly, in spite of the howling of the wolves, and, mounting Sleepy Sam, began to follow up the trail of the buffaloes. Each was looking for the other, and both were traveling in exactly opposite directions.

Frank had a long ride before him, and it was monotonous and tiresome. Pete appeared to have fully recovered from the effects of his long run, for he carried his rider at a rapid pace; but, at sunset, Frank had not reached the mountains. He

could not bear the thought of camping on that bare prairie, where he could have no fire, and he resolved to ride until he reached the timber at the base of the mountains, if it took him until midnight. Darkness settled down over the prairie, and, a short time afterward, he reached the woods. As he rode slowly along, in the hope of discovering some stream, on the banks of which he could camp, he saw a light shining through the trees. A second look showed him that it was a camp-fire. No doubt he would find Dick there. Without hesitating an instant, he put spurs to his horse, and rode up in full view of the fire, around which he saw four men lying on their blankets.

CHAPTER XIII.

Frank's New Acquaintances.

FRANK'S sudden appearance created considerable of a commotion in the camp, for the men sprang to their feet and reached rather hurriedly for their weapons. They were evidently alarmed; and Frank was a good deal surprised thereat, for he had not dreamed that men accustomed to the dangers of the prairie—as these undoubtedly were—could be frightened at the sudden approach of a single bewildered horseman. He, however, rode straight up to the fire, where the men stood with their rifles in their hands, and exclaimed, as he dismounted from his horse:

"Good evening, gentlemen!"

His politeness did not serve to allay the fears of the men, for they regarded him sharply for a moment, and then one of them asked, in a voic

that somewhat resembled the growl of an enraged bear:

"What do you want?"

"I am lost," replied Frank. "My horse was stampeded with a herd of buffaloes, and I am now making the best of my way back to my friends."

The man slowly surveyed him from head to foot, and then answered, in a tone of voice which showed that he did not believe Frank's statement:

"Lost! Lost, aint ye? Wal, what in tarnation are ye lost fur? Why don't ye go whar ye b'long?"

"That's what I want to do!" replied Frank, who, astonished at the manner in which he was received, and fearful that he would be compelled to pass another night alone on the prairie, did not notice the sly, meaning glances which the men exchanged. "I am trying to find my friends. I left them at the 'old bear's hole,' if you know where that is."

This statement was received with something like a long breath of relief by the trappers—for such they undoubtedly were—and the spokesman continued:

"Then, ye're sartin ye're lost, an' that ye aint

got no friends nigher nor the ole bar's hole? Who war ye travelin' with? Who's yer comp'ny?"

"Dick Lewis and old Bob Kelly," replied Frank, mentioning the names of the guides, with the hope that some of his new acquaintances might know them; nor was the hope a vain one, for the trappers repeated the names, and again exchanged those sly glances, which Frank noticed but could not understand:

"So ole Bob is yer comp'ny," said his questioner, at length; "an' ye're sartin ye left him at the ole bar's hole! Then, ye won't be likely to set eyes on him to-night, 'cause the bar's hole ar' a good fifty mile from here, an', if ye're actooally an' sartinly lost, ye aint no ways likely to find it in the dark."

The trapper was evidently forgetting his fears and recovering his good nature—if he possessed that quality—for, as he resumed his seat at the fire, he continued, in a somewhat milder tone:

"If yer hoss war stampeded, stranger, he must be powerful lively on his legs to have tuk ye so fur; but, I reckon, ye must be travelin' a leetle out of yer latitude. It aint often that a feller meets a teetotal stranger in these parts what says he's lost, an'

we don't like to take in every one as comes along; but, if so be that ye are a friend of Dick an' ole Bob, ye can hobble yer hoss an' camp here with us. Ye can sleep by our fire to-night, an' in the mornin' we'll set yer on the right track."

Frank gladly complied with this invitation, and, after relieving his horse of the saddle, he seated himself at the fire, and began to make a close examination of his new acquaintances. They were all large, muscular men, and were dressed in complete suits of buckskin, which were very ragged and dirty. Their faces were almost covered with thick, bushy whiskers, and their hair, which, judging by its tangled appearance, had never been made acquainted with a comb, hung down to their shoulders. The man who had acted the part of spokesman, was particularly noticeable, being more ragged and dirty than his companions, and his face, which bore several ugly scars, was almost as black as a negro's.

In short, they were a very ferocious looking set, and Frank almost wished he had remained on the prairie instead of coming to their camp. But, after all, he might be very much mistaken in his men. It was not to be expected that persons of

their calling, who had no doubt lived on the prairie from boyhood, who had been exposed to all kinds of weather, and braved innumerable dangers, it could not be expected that such men should always present a neat appearance. Beneath their rough exterior there might be hidden the warmest of hearts. And as for their reception of him, they had doubtless treated him as they treated every stranger they met on the prairie—on the principle, "Believe every man an enemy, until he proves himself otherwise."

While these thoughts were passing through Frank's mind, the trappers had been regarding him closely and with evident curiosity.

The result of their examination appeared to be satisfactory, for the spokesman presently remarked:

"It 's plain, stranger, that yer out of yer callin'. Ye do n't b'long on the prairy. Yer from the States, we take it."

Frank replied that he was, and then proceeded to give the trappers an account of the circumstances that had brought him to the prairie, and also told how he had made the acquaintance of Dick and old Bob; to all of which the men listened

eagerly, now and then exchanging the same sly glances that Frank had before noticed. When he had finished his story, the swarthy trapper arose to his feet, and, going to a tree close by, took down a piece of buffalo meat, from which he cut several slices that he placed on the coals, remarking as he did so:

"Whenever we do meet a stranger in these parts, an' he turns out to be the right kind of a chap, we allers treat him as handsome as we know how. We can't offer you anything more 'n a chunk of buffaler hump, but sich as we have yer welcome to."

The offer was evidently made in all sincerity, and if Frank still entertained any fears that the men were not what they should be, he speedily dismissed them, and again blessed his lucky stars that he was not compelled to pass another night alone on the prairie.

While his supper was cooking, he was again plied with questions, the most of them relating to the movements of old Bob; and especially did the trappers seem anxious to learn where he was going, and what he intended to do when he returned from California. Frank answered these questions as

well as he could, and his replies seemed to satisfy the men, one of whom finally changed the subject of the conversation, by remarking:

"I 'll allow that 's a fine shootin' iron of your 'n, stranger, but it 's a new-fangled consarn, I should say."

Frank, it will be remembered, had Archie's rifle, which, being a breech-loading weapon, was something the trappers had never seen before, and it required considerable explanation to enable them to understand "how the consarn worked."

From his rifle they went to the other articles of his "kit." The contents of his haversack were examined, the qualities of his hunting-knife and revolvers discussed, and then they turned their attention to his horse—made inquiries concerning his speed and bottom, until, weary with their questioning, they stretched themselves out by the fire and went to sleep.

After eating his supper, Frank followed their example; and, being completely exhausted, having scarcely closed his eyes during the preceding night, he slept soundly until morning.

When he awoke it was just daylight. The trappers had already arisen; the fire had been replen-

ished, and several slices of meat were broiling on the coals.

They hardly noticed Frank; the only reply his polite greetings received, being a sort of grunt and a slight nod of the head. After washing his hands and face in the creek that ran close by—a proceeding which the trappers regarded with undisguised contempt—he seated himself at the fire with the others and began helping himself to the meat, at the same time inquiring the way to the old bear's hole.

"That ar' is the way, stranger," replied the swarthy trapper, pointing in a direction exactly contrary to the one Frank had pursued the day before; "an', as I told ye last night, it 's nigh on to fifty miles off."

After this, they again relapsed into silence, and as soon as they had finished their breakfast, went out to catch their horses. Frank accompanied them; all his old fears that there was something wrong, revived with redoubled force, and he was anxious to leave the company of his new acquaintances as soon as possible. When he had caught and saddled Pete, he left him standing for a few moments, until he secured his rifle and haversack, and when he

turned to mount, he saw one of the trappers seize the horse by the bridle and spring into the saddle. Frank gazed in surprise at these movements, but before he could speak, the swarthy trapper turned suddenly upon him, exclaiming:

"Look a here, stranger! Ye come here last night without nobody's askin' ye, an' tells us some kind of a story 'bout yer bein' lost, an' all that. Now, mebbe yer all right, an' mebbe ye aint. Ye may have friends no great way off, that ye kalkerlate to bring down on us; but ye can't ketch old foxes like us in no sich trap as that ar'. We're jest goin' to take yer hoss to keep yer from findin' yer friends ag'in in a hurry. Yer young fur sich bisness as this yere, an' if ye did n't look so mighty innercent, I 'd split yer wizzen fur ye. So now be off to onct, an' do n't never cross our trail ag'in. If ye do—" The trapper finished the sentence by shaking his head threateningly.

Frank listened to this speech in utter bewilderment. He could scarcely believe his ears. But it was plain that the trappers were in earnest, for the one who had mounted Pete held his own horse by the bridle, in readiness to start. He fully realized his helpless situation, and it almost over-

powered him. But, at length, he found courage to say:

"You are certainly mistaken. I *am* lost. I don't know where to go to find my friends, and, if you take my horse from me, I may never find them again. Besides, what is your object in robbing me?"

"Wal, now, stranger," said the trapper, dropping the butt of his rifle to the ground, and leaning upon the muzzle of the weapon, "we jest aint a goin' to stand no foolin'. We b'lieve yer a spy, an' ar' goin' to bring Bob Kelly an' the rest of yer friends down on us. That's jest what's the matter. The prairy is cl'ar, thar aint no Injuns to massacree ye; ye have a good pair of legs, so trot off on 'em to onct. Ye can be glad enough that we didn't tie ye up to a tree, an' leave ye to the wolves. If ole Kelly could get his hands on us, we'd be used a heap wusser nor robbin', an' you know it well enough. An' when ye see the ole chap, ye can tell him that the next time he wants to try to ketch Black Bill, he'll have to get up a better trick nor this yere. Come, now, mizzle—sally out to onct—an' don't stop to talk, 'cause it won't do no arthly good whatsomever. Yer hoss

is gone—that's settled—an', if yer shootin' iron were any 'count, we'd a tuk that too. We've left ye three loads, an' that'll kill game enough to do ye till ye find yer friends. Come, walk off—make yourself skeerce, sudden."

There was a wicked, determined look in the trapper's eye that told Frank that he was in earnest; and, fully convinced that it would be useless to remonstrate, and fearful that if he did not obey the order, the man would fulfill his threat of tying him to a tree, and leaving him to the mercy of the wolves, he shouldered his rifle, and, with a heavy heart, set off on his journey.

When he reached the top of a high swell, about half a mile from the camp, he looked back, and saw the trappers riding off at a rapid gallop, Pete playing and prancing with his new rider as if he was perfectly satisfied with the change. Frank watched them as long as they remained in sight, and then, throwing himself on the ground, covered his face with his hands, and gave away to the most bitter thoughts. What could have induced the trappers to act so treacherously? Did they really suspect him of being a spy, or was that merely an excuse to rob him in his defenseless situation?

The whole transaction was involved in a mystery he could not fathom, nor was it at all probable that he could arrive at a solution until he should see Dick or old Bob Kelly. Would he ever see them again, was a question he dare not ask himself. The chances were certainly not in his favor, situated as he was, alone, in the midst of an unbroken wilderness, the prairie stretching away, on one hand, as far as his eye could reach, the Rocky Mountains looming up on the other. But he was not one to look altogether upon the dark side of the picture. It had a bright side as well, and he found that he had reason to congratulate himself that the outlaws—for such he now knew them to be—had let him off so easily. What if they had left him bound to a tree, as they had threatened? The chances were not one in a hundred that he would ever have been released. Although his horse had been taken from him, he had been allowed to go free, and to retain his rifle and hunting-knife. Yes, his situation might have been infinitely worse. He still had much to be grateful for, and, as long as he had life, he would cherish the hope of being able to find his way to his friends As these thoughts passed through his mind, they

brought renewed strength and determination, and, rising to his feet, he again set out at a brisk walk.

He remembered that the outlaws had told him that, in order to reach the old bear's hole, he must travel in a direction exactly opposite to the one he was pursuing; but he had good reason to believe that they had endeavored to mislead him. When he took his involuntary ride, he was careful to remember the points of the compass, and, as Pete had carried him exactly south, of course, in order to reach his friends, he must travel north. He had no compass, but the sun was just rising, and he was able to calculate all the points from that. Having settled this to his satisfaction, he began an examination of his haversack, and found that its contents had been thoroughly overhauled—no doubt while he was asleep—and that the outlaws had left him three cartridges for his rifle, and his flint and steel. All the other articles, which consisted of several rounds of ammunition for his revolvers (which had gone off with his horse), stone arrow-heads, spear-heads, the claws of the bear that Dick had killed in the cave, and numerous other relics which Archie had collected since leaving St. Joseph, had all been abstracted.

In spite of his unpleasant situation, Frank could not repress a smile, when he thought how indignant his cousin would be, when he received an account of his losses. Having completed his examination, and placed his remaining cartridges carefully away in his pocket, he resumed his journey, and, just as he reached the top of a swell, he discovered a horseman galloping rapidly along the edge of the willows that fringed the base of the mountains. The thought that he saw something familiar, about both the horse and his rider, had scarcely passed through Frank's mind, when he was electrified by the sight of a large brindle dog, which ran in and out of the bushes, with his nose close to the ground, now and then uttering an impatient bark, which was answered by yells of encouragement from the horseman. There was no mistaking that yell, and Frank ran down the swell, swinging his hat, and endeavoring to attract the attention of the man with a voice which, in his excitement, he could scarcely raise above a whisper. But he was discovered. Both dog and horseman turned toward him, and, a moment afterward, Frank had one arm around the neck of Useless, and his hand was inclosed in the trapper's vice-like grasp.

CHAPTER XIV.

The Trader's Expedition.

"NICK," exclaimed Frank, as soon as he could speak, "this is the second time you have found me when lost; but I wish you had come a little sooner, for—"

"You keerless feller!" interrupted the trapper, who knew in a moment that there was something wrong, "you teetotally keerless feller! whar's your hoss? Tell me, to onct, what's come on him."

"He was stolen from me," answered Frank. "I camped last night about two miles from here, with a party of trappers, and they robbed me."

"Did!" exclaimed Dick. "Bar and buffaler! who war they? They war n't no trappers, I can tell ye, if they done that ar' mean trick. Tell me all about it to onct."

Frank then proceeded to relate all that had transpired at the camp; told how closely the men had questioned him concerning the intended movements of old Bob; repeated all the threats which the outlaw had made, and concluded his narrative with saying:

"He told me that when I saw old Bob again, I could say to him, that the next time he wanted to catch Black Bill, he—"

"Black Bill!" almost yelled the trapper. "Black Bill! That ar' tells the hul story. The scoundrel had better steer cl'ar of me an' old Bob, 'cause I'm Bob's chum now, an' any harm that's done to him is done to me too. I can tell you, you keerless feller, you oughter be mighty glad that you aint rubbed out altogether."

"I begin to think so too," replied Frank; "but, Dick, I want my horse."

"Wal, then, you'll have to wait till he comes to you, or till them ar' fellers git ready to fetch him back. 'Taint no 'arthly use to foller 'em, 'cause they'll be sartin to put a good stretch of country atween them an' ole Bob afore they stop. Your hoss ar' teetotally gone, youngster—that's as true as gospel. I tell you ag'in, 'taint every one that

Black Bill let 's off so easy. Climb up behind me, an' let 's travel back to the ole bar's hole."

Frank handed his rifle to his companion, mounted Sleepy Sam, and the trappers drove toward the camp, slowly and thoughtfully. For nearly an hour they rode along without speaking to each other. Dick, occasionally shaking his head and muttering "Bar an' buffaler—you *keerless* feller." But at length he straitened up in the saddle, and holding his heavy rifle at arm's length, exclaimed:

"Youngster, I do n't own much of this world's plunder, an' what 's more, I never expect to. But what little I have got is of use to me, an' without it I should soon starve. But I 'd give it all up sooner nor sleep in a camp with Black Bill an' his band of rascals. I 'd fight 'em now if I should meet 'em, an' be glad of the chance; but thar 's a heap of difference atween goin' under, in a fair skrimmage, an' bein' rubbed out while you ar' asleep. Durin' the forty year I 've been knocked about, I 've faced a'most every kind of danger from wild Injuns an' varmints, an' I never onct flinched—till I rid on them steam railroads—but, youngster, I would n't do what you done last night fur nothin'. Howsomever, the danger 's all over now, an' you

have come out with a hul skin; so tell me what you done while you war lost."

The manner in which the trapper spoke of the danger through which he had passed, frightened Frank exceedingly. He knew that Dick was as brave as a man could possibly be, and the thought that he had unconsciously exposed himself to peril that the reckless trapper would shrink from encountering, occasioned feelings of terror, which could not be quieted even by the knowledge that he had passed the ordeal with safety; and when, in compliance with the guide's request, he proceeded to relate his adventures, it was with a trembling voice, that could not fail to attract the trapper's attention.

"I do n't wonder you 're skeered," said he, as Frank finished his story. "It would skeer a'most any body. But it 's over, now, an' it aint no ways likely you 'll ever meet 'em ag'in. Me an' ole Bob will see 'em some day, an' when we settle with 'em, we will be sartin to take out pay fur that hoss. When we git to camp Bob 'll tell you how he happens to owe Black Bill a settlement. When we seed you goin' off in that ar' way," continued the trapper, turning around in his saddle so as to face

Frank, "we did n't feel no ways skeery 'bout your comin' back all right, if you got away from the buffalers. Your uncle said, 'In course the boy has got sense enough to see that the mountains now ar' on his right hand, an' to know that when he wants to come back, he must keep them on his left hand;' an' jest afore he went to sleep, I heered him say to ole Bob, 'I wonder how Frank is gettin' on without his blanket.' Your little cousin said, 'I hope he 'll fetch back my rifle, an' my possible-sack, an' the things what 's in it, all right, 'cause I should hate to lose them Injun's top-knots. I guess he won't laugh none, when he finds out that all them stone arrer-heads, an' spear-heads, an' other fixin's ar' gone.' Ole Bob, he knowed, too, that you would turn up all right if you could keep on your hoss till he stopped. But, bar and buffaler! we did n't think you war goin' to camp with that varlet, Black Bill. If we had, thar would n't have been much sleepin' done in our camp last night."

Having thus assured Frank that his friends had entertained no fears of his ability to find his way back to the wagon, the trapper again alluded to the subject of the robbery, obliging his young companion to relate the particulars over and over

again, each time expressing his astonishment and indignation in no very measured terms. In this way they passed the fifteen miles that lay between them and the camp, and finally arrived within sight of the "ole bar's hole."

Mr. Winters, Archie, and Bob were seated on the ground near the wagon, but when they discovered the trapper riding toward them with Frank mounted behind him, they rose to their feet in surprise, and Archie inquired, as he grasped his cousin's hand—

"Did your horse run himself to death?

Before Frank could answer, Dick sprang from the saddle, exclaiming:

"Bob! Black Bill 's on the prairy."

"Black Bill on the prairy!" repeated the old man, slowly, regarding his friend as if he was hardly prepared to believe what he had heard.

"Yes, he ar' on this yere very prairy," replied Dick; "an', Bob," he continued, stretching his brawny arms to their fullest extent in front of him, and clenching his huge fists, "an', Bob, that ar' keerless feller actooally camped with him an' his rascally chums, last night. Yes, sir, staid in their camp an' slept thar, an' this mornin' they said as

how he war a spy of your'n, sent to ketch 'em; so they stole his hoss."

Old Bob was so astonished at this intelligence, that he almost leaped from the ground; while Dick, without allowing the excited listeners an opportunity to ask a question, seated himself beside Mr. Winters and proceeded to give a full account of all that had transpired at Black Bill's camp; dur ing which, Archie, surprised and indignant at the treatment his cousin had received, learned that he also had been a heavy loser by the operation. All his beloved relics were gone. But they still had miles of Indian country to traverse, and these could be replaced; while Frank, in being robbed of his horse had sustained a loss that could not be made good. Archie was generous; and, declaring that he had ridden on horseback until he was actually tired of it, told his cousin to consider Sleepy Sam as his own property, an offer which the latter emphatically refused to accept.

"Never mind, youngster," said old Bob, who had listened to all that had passed between the cousins, "never mind. You shan't lose nothin' by bein' robbed by that varlet. Me an' Dick will put you on hossback ag'in afore you're two days older.

But this yere shows you that you ought n't to make friends with every feller you meet on the prairy, no more 'n you would in a big city. Now if you war lost in the settlements, and did n't know whar to go to find your hum, you would think twice afore you would camp with a teetotal stranger, an' a feller oughter do the same thing on the prairy. I larnt that long ago, an' through that same feller, Black Bill. Years ago, when Dick's old man war alive, it war n't so. If a feller got a leetle out of his reckonin', an' walked into a stranger's camp, he could roll himself up in his blanket an' sleep as safe an' sound as he could any whar, an' neither man war n't afraid that the other would rub him out afore daylight. But it aint so now. Them fellers in the settlements got to doin' meanness, an' run here to git cl'ar of the laws. But they found thar war law here too; an' when they done any of their badness, an' we got our hands on 'em, we made short work with 'em. But they kept comin' in fast, and when three or four of 'em got together, they would take to the mountains, an' thar war n't no use tryin' to ketch 'em. When we seed how things war agoin', a lot of us ole trappers, that had knowed each other fur years, made up a

comp'ny. We had to do it to defend ourselves ag'in them varlets, fur it soon got so it war n't healthy fur a lone man on the prairy, if he had any plunder wuth baggin'. We stuck together till that Saskatchewan scrape, an' now me an' Dick ar' the only ones left. I do n't say that we 're the only honest trappers agoin', 'cause that aint so. Thar ar' plenty of good ones left; but we ar' the last of our comp'ny, an', somehow, we do n't keer 'bout trappin' with strangers.

"Wal, one spring we went to the fort to trade off the spelter we had ketched durin' the winter, an' the trader we sold 'em to, war makin' up a comp'ny to go to the head waters of the Missouri. He war goin' with his expedition, an' he wanted us to go too. He offered us good pay; he would find us we'pons, hosses, traps, and provender fur nothin', an' buy our furs to boot. He done this 'cause thar war a good many traders workin' ag'in him, an' he wanted to be sartin of gittin' all the furs we trapped. We had a leetle talk among ourselves about it, an', finally, told him that it war a bargain, an' that we would go. So he writ down our names, an' we tuk up our quarters in the fort till the day come to start. The trader's name war Forbes, an'

as he war our boss, we used to call him Cap'n Forbes. He war n't jest the kind of a man a feller would take to be a trader—he smelt too much of the settlements—an' even at the fort, among rough trappers an' soldiers, he would spruce up an' strut like a turkey. 'Sides, he had a nigger to wait on him an' take keer of his hoss. As I war sayin', we noticed all these things, but we did n't keer fur 'em, fur, in course, it war n't none of our consarn; all we wanted war fur him to pay us fur the spelter we ketched, an' we knowed he could do that, fur the fellers all said he had a big pile of gold an' silver that he carried in his saddle-bags.

"Wal, we packed our blankets an' we'pons down to the quarters the cap'n pointed out, an' when we got thar, we found he had half a dozen chaps down 'sides ourselves. We knowed one or two of 'em, (an' we did n't know nothin' good of 'em neither,) but the others war strangers to us. Among the strangers war Black Bill—Bosh Peters he said his name war. He war a'most as black as the cap'n's darkey, an' thar war a bad look in his eye that none of us did n't like. An' him an' his crowd war n't at all pleased to see us neither; fur, although they met us kind enough, asked us to help ourselves to their

grub, an' inquired 'bout our luck in trappin', durin' the last season, thar war somethin' 'bout them that told us plainer nor words that they would have been much better satisfied if we had stayed away

"It war a'most night when we went to the quarters, an' arter we had eat our supper, we smoked our pipes, spread our blankets, an' went to sleep. How long I slept I do n't know; but I waked up sometime durin' the night, an' thought I heered somebody talkin' in a low voice. I listened, an', sure enough, thar war two fellers jest outside of the quarters plannin' somethin'. I heered one of 'em ask:

"'When shall we do it?'

"'Time enough to think of that when we git to the mountains,' said the other.

"'But ar' you sartin' he 's goin' to take it with him?'

"'In course! I heered him say so!'

"'Wal, then, it's all right. But we must be mighty keerful, 'cause our boys do n't like the looks of them last fellers that jined the comp'ny. So keep a still tongue in your head.' They done some more plannin' and talkin', but I could n't hear what it war. Then they moved away in

different directions, an' purty quick somebody come into the quarters, easy like, an' laid down on his blanket, but it war so dark I could n't see who it war. Wal, I thought the matter all over, an' soon made up my mind that the varlets had been plannin' an' talkin' ag'in the trader and his money-bags; but when I told the boys of it the next mornin', they all laughed at me, an' said the cap'n war n't fool enough to tote so much money to the mountains with him when he could leave it at the fort, whar it would be safe. They told me I had better not speak of it ag'in, fur if it got to the trader's ears, he might think I war a greeny. Wal, I war quite a youngster, that 's a fact; but it war n't long afore it come out that I had more sense nor any of 'em."

CHAPTER XV.

The Outlaw's Escape.

"BEFORE goin' further," continued the trapper, "I oughter tell you that this Black Bill had been on the prairy a long time. Like a good many others, he had run away from the law in the States, an', fallin' in with more rascals as bad as he war, he soon made himself known, by name, to nearly every trapper in the country. 'Sides robbin' lone men he met on the prairy an' in the mountains, he would jine in with Injuns, an' lead 'em ag'in wagon trains.

"None of our comp'ny had ever seed him, although, in course, we had often heered of him, an' we never onct thought that he would have the face to jine in with a party of honest trappers; so we called him Peters, bein' very fur from thinkin' that he war the feller that had done so much mischief.

If we *had* knowed who he war, prairy law would n't have let him live five minits.

"Wal, arter we had been at the fort 'bout two weeks, Cap'n Forbes got every thing ready fur the start, an', one mornin', bright an' 'arly, we sot off t'wards the mountains. Thar war fourteen of us altogether—seven of us fellers, five of Bosh Peters' party, the trader, and his darkey. We had four pack mules; and, as the Cap'n war n't a bit stingy, he had give us good we'pons an' plenty of powder an' lead. I had n't forgot what them two fellers said that night, although I had n't never spoke about it, fur fear of bein' laughed at—an' I kept close watch on the trader, to find out if he had his money with him. He carried a pair of saddle-bags, an' they were well packed, too; but, judgin' by the keerless way he throwed them around, when we camped fur the night, thar war n't no money in 'em. Bosh Peters and his party had all along been tryin' to git on the right side of us, and purty soon our fellers begun to think that we had been fooled in 'em, an' that they war all right arter all.

"Wal, when we reached the trappin' grounds, we built our quarters fur the winter, an' then commenced work. The trader went with one feller

ole day, an' with another the next. He war n't no trapper; but he liked the sport, an' seemed to want to larn how it war done. But, arter awhile he got tired of this, an' staid in the camp from mornin' till night. He never went out with me; if he had, I should have told him to keep his eye on them money-bags, if he had 'em with him.

"One day, as I war at work settin' a trap in a clump of bushes that grew on the banks of a little creek, I heered some fellers comin' along, talkin' to each other. Now, jest that one little thing war enough to make me b'lieve that thar war somethin' wrong in the wind, 'cause, when fellers go out to hunt an' trap, an' fur nothin' else, they do n't go together through the woods, as though they were huntin' cows. So I sot still an' listened, an' purty quick heered Bosh Peters talkin'. Thar war one feller with him, but the bushes war so thick I could n't see him, an' I did n't know his voice. They war comin' right t'wards me, an' when they reached the creek, one of 'em went to get a drink, an' the others sot down on a log not ten foot from me. Purty soon I heered Bosh Peters say:

"'I know it's time we war doin' somethin

Tom, but I 'm a'most afraid to try it. Them 'ar fellers are seven to our five, an' if we should n't happen to get away, we would ketch prairy law, sartin; an' that 's a heap wusser nor law in the settlements. They do n't give a feller a chance to break jail on the prairy.'

"'Black Bill,' said the other, 'thar 's jest no use a talkin that 'ar way. If we 're a goin' to do it at all, now is jest as good a chance as we shall have. The cap'n stays in the camp all day alone, an' afore the other chaps get back to larn what 's done, we can be miles in the mountains.'

"'Wal, then,' said Black Bill, 'let 's do the job to onct. The cap'n war in the camp this mornin' when I left, an' if he 's thar this arternoon, we 'll finish him, an' the money-bags are ourn. But let 's move off; it won't do fur us to be seed together.'

"The varlets walked away, an' I lay thar in them bushes fifteen minutes afore I stirred. This war the fust time that I knowed Black Bill war one of our comp'ny. To say that I war surprised to hear it, would n't half tell how I felt. I war teetotally tuk back. The idee of that feller comin into our camp, when he knowed that if he war

found out, short work would be made with him! I could hardly b'lieve it. But I could n't lay thar, foolin' away time with such thoughts, when I knowed that the cap'n's life war in danger. So, thinkin' the rascals had got out of sight an' hearin', I crawled out of the bushes, intendin' to start at onct fur the camp, an' tell the fellers what I had jest heered. I walked down to the creek fust, to get a drink, an' jest as I war bendin' over, I heered the crack of a rifle; a bullet whistled by, not half an inch from my head, an' buried itself in the ground. I jumped to my feet, an' lookin' up the bank, saw a leetle smoke risin' from behind a log not twenty yards distant. Grabbin' my rifle, which I had laid down as I war goin' to drink, I rushed acrost the creek, an' the next minit war standin' face to face with Black Bill. Fur an instant the chap shook like a leaf, an' turned as pale as his black skin would let him. Then he seemed to find his wits ag'in, fur he stuck out his hand, sayin':

"'By gum, Bob Kelly! is that you? I'll be shot if I did n't take you fur an Injun. I'm mighty glad I did n't hit you, Bob!'

"'You can't blarney me, Black Bill,' said I

'I know you;' an' as I stood thar lookin' at the rascal, an' thought of all the badness he had done, I had half a mind to shoot him. The way of it war, the varlet kind o' thought that somebody had been listenin' to what he said 'bout robbin' the cap'n, an' he had hid behind the log to watch. When he seed me come out of the bushes, he knowed that I had heered all that had been goin' on, an' he thought his best plan war to leave me thar dead. But, although he war n't twenty yards off when he fired at me, he missed me teetotally. Wal, when he seed that I knowed him, an' that he could n't fool me into b'lievin' that he tuk me fur an Injun, he thought he would skeer me, so he growled:

"'If you know me, Bob Kelly, you know a man that won't stand no nonsense. I have friends not fur off, an' if you know any thing, you 'll travel on 'bout your own bisness.'

"'Now, look a here, Black Bill,' said I, 'I haint never been in the habit of standin' much nonsense, neither—leastways not from such fellers as you, an' if you knowed me, you would know that I do n't skeer wuth a charge of gunpowder. That 'ar is the way to the camp, an

if you want to live two minutes longer, you'll travel off to onct.' Seein' that he didn't start, but that he stood eyein' me as if he'd a good mind to walk into me, I stepped back, an' p'intin' my rifle straight at his heart, said: 'I shan't tell you more 'n onct more that 'ar is the way to camp. You can go thar, or you can stay here fur the wolves, jest as you please.'

"I guess he seed that I war in 'arnest, fur he shouldered his empty rifle, an' started through the woods, I follerin' close behind, ready to drop him if he should run or show fight. I felt mighty oneasy while travelin' through that timber, 'cause I knowed well enough that the rascal had friends, an' if one of 'em should happen to see me marchin' Black Bill off that 'ar way, he'd drop me, sartin. But I reached the camp in safety, an' thar I found two of our own fellers, an' four that I had allers thought war friends of Black Bill. They all jumped up as we came in, fur they knowed by the way I looked that somethin' war wrong, an' one of 'em said:

"'What's Bosh Peters been a doin', Bob?'

"'That aint no Bosh Peters,' said I; 'that 'ar chap is Black Bill.'

"Now comes the funniest part of the hul bisness. Every trapper on the prairy, as I told you, had heered of Black Bill, an' when I told 'em that my prisoner war the very chap, an' that he had been layin' a plan to rob the cap'n, I never seed sich a mad set of men in my life.

"They all sot up a yell, an' one of 'em, that I would have swore war a friend of Black Bill, drawed his knife, an' made at the varlet as if he war goin' to rub him out to onct. But my chum, Ned Roberts, ketched him, and tuk the we'pon away from him. This sot the feller to bilin', and he rushed round the camp wusser nor a crazy man. He said that Black Bill had shot his chum, an' that he war swore to kill him wherever he found him; and he war goin' to do it, too. An' the fust thing we knowed, he grabbed somebody's rifle, an' jumped back to shoot the pris'ner. But he war ketched ag'in, afore he could fire, and then he howled wusser nor ever. Wal, we tied Black Bill to a tree in the camp, an' this feller kept slippin' round, with his tomahawk in his hand, an' it tuk two men to get the we'pon away from him.

"The chap tuk on so, that we all thought that he told the truth, but, (would you believe it?) I

arterwards larnt that he war the very same chap that I had heered talkin' with Black Bill 'bout robbin' the cap'n. He kind o' thought that we might know something ag'in him, an' he carried on in that way to make us b'lieve that he war really an enemy of Black Bill. In course we did n't know this at the time. If we had, he 'd soon been a pris'ner too. But, supposin' him to be tellin' the gospel truth, we felt sorry fur him, an' promised that Black Bill should n't ever be let loose to do meanness ag'in. While the fuss war goin on, the trader come out; an' when we told him what happened—how the pris'ner an' one of his friends, that we did n't know, had been layin' a plan to do robbery an' killin'; an' that the chap he called Bosh Peters war none other than Black Bill the outlaw—I never seed a man so tuk back in my life. It skeered him purty bad. He had allers looked upon Black Bill as one of the honestest men in the expedition; an', when he found that he war a traitor, he did n't know who to trust; an' he tuk mighty good keer not to be alone durin' the rest of the arternoon.

"Wal, when it growed dark, the fellers began to come in from their day's work, some loaded with

furs, an' others with a piece of bar or big-horn, which they had knocked over for supper. As fast as they come in, we told 'em what war up, an' they did n't take it very easy, now, I tell you.

"The idee that Black Bill, arter doin' so much badness—robbin' lone trappers an' leadin' wild Injuns ag'in wagon trains—should come into one of our forts, an' stick his name down with those of honest, hard-workin' trappers, when he knowed that every one of 'em had plenty ag'in him, I say it war hard to b'lieve. But thar he war, tied to a tree, an', when the boys come to look at him close, they wondered that they had n't knowed afore that he war a villain.

"Wal, we waited a long time for all of our fellers to come in; but thar war three of us missin', an' that war the only thing that saved Black Bill. We did n't want to pass sentence on him without lettin' all the boys have a chance to say somethin'; an' as they might come in some time durin' the night, we thought we would keep the varlet till morning. So we tied him, hand an' foot, and laid him away in one of the cabins. The cap'n's darkey made him a bed of hemlock boughs, an' laid him on it, abusin' him all the while like all natur',

an' goin' in for shootin' him to onct. It would have been well for one of us, if we had put that darkey in there as a pris'ner too. But we did n't know it, an' afore we got through he cost us the life of one of the best men in our comp'ny. The fellers then all went to bed except me. I guarded the varlet till the moon went down, and then, arter calling my chum, who war to watch him till daylight, I went into my quarters an' slept soundly all the rest of the night. When it come mornin', I awoke, an', in a few minits, all our boys war up. The fellers had all come in durin' the night, an' ole Jim Roberts—my chum's ole man—who war our leader, called a council. Black Bill did n't seem to have a friend among us, for the last man of us said as how the law must be lived up to.

"'Who guarded him last night?' asked the ole man.

"'I did,' I answered, 'till the moon went down, and then Ned tuk my place.'

"'Wal, Ned, bring out the pris'ner,' said the ole man. 'But whar is Ned?' he asked, runnin' his eye over the camp. 'Ned! Ned Roberts!'

"I had all along s'posed that Ned war still guardin' the pris'ner; but when he did n't answer,

I knowed in a minit that somethin' had been goin' wrong ag'in, an' the others knowed it too, fur men who have lived in danger all their lives aint long in seein' through a thing of that kind. So we all rushed to the cabin where we had left the outlaw, an' there lay my chum—stark an' dead—stabbed to the heart! The pris'ner war gone. Thar war the strips of hickory bark we had tied him with, an' thar war the knife he had used—but Black Bill had tuk himself safe off. We stood thar, not knowin' what to say or do. Ole Jim war the fust that could speak.

"'Another gone,' said he; 'an' it's my only son; an' now whar's the traitor?'

"He looked from one to the other of us as he said this, but no one answered.

"'He's here right among you,' said the ole man, the tears rollin' down his cheeks. 'He's right among you. That knife could n't got in here without hands; an' thar's somebody in this yere camp, that's helped Black Bill in makin' his escape. Speak, men, who 's the outlaw's friend?'

"But still no one answered. We all knowed he war thar, but how could we tell who it war, when we had no proff ag'in any one?

"'Bring him out, boys,' said the old man, at last. 'He war a kind son, an' a good trapper. But he 's done his work now, an' we 've lost one of the best men in our comp'ny.'

"Wal, we carried poor Ned out, an' arter layin' him in my cabin, we started off on the trail of the outlaw. But he had a good long start, an' that night we had to come back without him. I've never seen him from that day to this.

"The next mornin' none of us went out to trap, fur we could n't help thinkin' of poor Ned. He war the fust chum I had ever had, an' me an' him had been together a'most ever since we had strength to shoulder a rifle—more 'n ten year—an', in course, I war in natur' bound to avenge him. I staid in my quarters, wonderin' who it war that had helped the outlaw; when, all of a sudden, I happened to think of somethin' that brought me to my feet in a hurry, an' sent me into ole Jim's quarters. I talked the matter over with him, told him what I thought, an', in a few minits more, we called our boys together, an' war marchin' t'wards the trader's camp. The darkey war cookin' his master's breakfast, in front of the cabin, singin' an' whistlin' as jolly as could be; but when he

seed us a comin' he shet up in a mighty hurry, an' actooally turned white! I knowed he would n't act that ar' way if he war n't guilty, so I sung out, 'Here 's the traitor, boys!'

"The darkey, seein' that the thing war out, started to run. He had n't gone far, howsomever, afore we had him, an'. then he 'fessed the hul bisness. He said he had told the outlaw that the cap'n war goin' to take his money-bags with him, an' that, bein' the last to leave Black Bill arter we had tied him, he had hid the knife in his bed. The pris'ners arms had been fastened above his elbows, an', in course, havin' a sharp we'pon, it war the easiest thing in the world to cut himself loose, an' to pitch into poor Ned afore he knowed it. Arter he had 'fessed this, we held a council, an' prairy law tuk its course. This skeered the trader wusser nor ever. If his own servant war treacherous, he could n't trust nobody. So he ordered us to break up our camp an' strike fur the fort. When we got thar, an' offered to give up our hosses an' we'pons, he would n't listen to it at all. He said that we had saved him an' his money-bags, an' that we could keep our kit, an' welcome.

"Wal, our huntin' expedition bein' broke up, we

put out on our own hook. We still thought that them four fellers b'longed to Black Bill's party, an' we soon found that it war so; fur we had hardly got out of sight, afore they started fur the mountains. They knowed 'bout whar to go to find the outlaw, an' they 've been with him ever since, robbin' an' stealin'. One of his party has been rubbed out, but thar ar' four of them left yet, an' they do a heap of mischief. I have looked an' watched fur 'em fur years, an' if I never find 'em, I shall leave 'em to Dick; so I know justice will be done 'em. If you had knowed all these things, youngster, I don't reckon you would have slept very sound in Black Bill's camp."

CHAPTER XVI.

The King of the Grove.

THE travelers had been intensely interested in the old trapper's story, and not even the thought that the danger was passed, and that Frank was safe in camp again, could altogether quiet their feelings. Frank was more astonished than ever, and he secretly determined that he would never again lose sight of the wagon, if he could avoid it. But, if he should again be compelled to take an involuntary ride, and should happen to fall in with strangers on the prairie, he would give them a wide berth.

Mr. Winters said nothing. He did not think that the occasion demanded that he should caution his nephew, for it was by no means probable that the latter would soon forget his night in the outlaw's camp.

His adventures, which were the subject of a lengthy conversation, did not, however, entirely quench his love of excitement, and when, after a hearty dinner on buffalo hump, Archie proposed a short ride on the prairie, he agreed to accompany him, and, as soon as he had caught and saddled his uncle's horse, was ready for the start. As they rode along out of the woods, Archie informed his cousin that another herd of buffaloes had been seen that morning by old Bob, feeding near the base of the mountains, and announced his determination of endeavoring to shoot one, if they should happen to come across them. As there was now no danger of being stampeded—both of their horses being old buffalo hunters—Frank agreed to the proposal, and followed his cousin, who led the way toward the place where the buffaloes had last been seen. Swell after swell they mounted, straining their eyes in every direction, without discovering the wished-for game.

But they saw something else that excited them quite as much as the sight of a herd of buffaloes would have done; for, as Archie, who had ridden some distance in advance of his cousin, reached the top of one of the hills, Frank saw him suddenly

draw rein, and back his horse down the swell, out of sight of something which he had discovered on the other side. He then rode back to meet Frank, and, as soon as he came within speaking distance, whispered, excitedly:

"There 's a big drove of wild horses out there."

Frank waited to hear no more, but, throwing his bridle to his cousin, dismounted from his horse, and, going cautiously to the top of the swell, looked over. Sure enough, there they were, about half a mile distant, probably five hundred of them, scattered about over the prairie, some feeding, and others prancing about, as if wholly unconscious of danger. Among them was one horse—an iron-gray—rendered conspicuous by his great size and extraordinary beauty, which galloped about as if he were "monarch of all he surveyed." Frank remembered what Dick had told him about every drove of wild horses having a "master," and, as he watched his movements, and noticed how the other horses shied at his approach, he came to the conclusion that the gray horse was the king. He gazed at them for some time, admiring their rapid, graceful movements, and thinking how fully the gray would supply the place of the horse he had

lost, when he noticed that the animals were feeding directly toward him. Fearful of being discovered, he crawled back down the swell, and rejoined his cousin.

"What shall we do?" asked the latter, excitedly.

"Don't you suppose Dick could catch one of those fellows?" inquired Frank.

"Of course he could," answered Archie, quickly. "Didn't he catch that black mustang he told us about—a horse that every body had tried to catch, and could n't? Let's go back, and ask him to try."

The boys hastily remounted, and started for the camp as fast as their horses could carry them. Archie, of course, led the way, and, as he dashed up to the wagon, he threw himself from the saddle, exclaiming:

"Dick, there 's a drove of wild horses out there on the prairie. Jump on Sam, and go and catch one for Frank."

"That 's the same drove I seed day afore yesterday," said old Bob, "an' that 's what I meant when I told Frank we 'd put him on hossback ag'in afore he war two days older. Ketch my hoss, Dick."

Dick did as he was desired, and, by this time, Frank had come up, Archie, in his eagerness, having left him far behind.

"Did you skeer 'em, youngsters?" asked old Bob, as he went to the wagon and drew out two rawhide lassos, one of which he handed to Dick.

"No," replied Frank. "They did n't see us. Dick, catch the king—he 's a large iron-gray—the prettiest horse in the drove. If I could have him, I would be glad I lost Pete."

"Wal, now, that ar' will be a hard thing to do, youngsters," replied the trapper, coiling up his lasso, and hanging it on the horn of his saddle; "a mighty hard thing to do. Them ar' kings ar' allers the swiftest hosses in the drove; an' it aint every ole buffaler hunter that can keep up with 'em."

Archie was astonished to hear the trapper speak so lightly of Sleepy Sam, a horse that had several times proved himself to be possessed of great speed; but Dick hastened to explain.

"I aint sayin' nothin' ag'in your hoss, little one, no more 'n I am ag'in Bob's. But if you had chased wild hosses as often as I have, you would know that a hoss can beat any thing in a wagon

train, an' yet have no bisness with the king of a drove. I won't say that we 'll ketch that gray fur you, Frank, but we 'll try hard, an' if he is too fast fur us, we 'll lasso one of the others, sartin. We 'll bring back somethin' fur you to ride."

By this time the trappers were ready for the start. Mr. Winters and the boys accompanied them to the edge of the prairie, and there Bob and Dick left them, after repeatedly assuring Frank that it was not their intention to return empty-handed.

When they had disappeared, Mr. Winters and the boys seated themselves on the ground, and for nearly an hour, waited and listened for the sound of the pursuit. Suddenly a single horse appeared upon the summit of a distant swell, and facing about, stood as if regarding some object that had excited his curiosity. Then came another, and another, and in a moment more the entire drove appeared, running at the top of their speed. One minute elapsed—two—three—and then two more horses suddenly arose over the swell, and followed swiftly after the drove. The chase had begun in earnest. The boys were surprised, and not a little discouraged, to see the trappers so far behind. But

still they had great confidence in them, and Frank was already reconciled to the loss of his horse, and confident that he would own another before he went to sleep that night. The chase was tending directly toward the mountains, and it presented a sight the boys would have been loth to miss. Nearer and nearer came the wild steeds, prancing and snorting, and looking back at the strange objects that were pursuing them. Presently, among the foremost ones, the boys discovered the gray king. He moved over the ground as lightly as if he had been furnished with wings, and as Frank watched his movements, he reluctantly came to the conclusion that if his endurance was as great as his speed, he must content himself with one of the common horses of the drove. They continued to advance until they came within a quarter of a mile of the willows, when they seemed, for the first time, to discover that their retreat in that direction was cut off by the mountains. This appeared to confuse and frighten them. The foremost ones slackened their speed, but seeing their pursuers close behind them, the drove suddenly divided, part of the horses turning one way, and the rest going the other. The trap

pers had kept their eyes on the king, and, when he turned, they singled him out from the others, and followed him with increased speed. The gray mustang made an exhibition of his powers that was truly surprising; but the trappers took a "short cut" on him, and gained so rapidly that Frank's hopes rose again. Sleepy Sam was running splendidly; but, to the surprise of all, old Bob's ungainly, raw-boned horse, in answer to a yell from his rider, bounded past him. All this happened in much less time than we have taken to describe it. The horses moved with wonderful rapidity, and, in a very few moments after the drove divided, the gray king and the trappers were out of sight behind the swells, and all sounds of the chase had died away in the distance.

Mr. Winters then returned to the camp, while the excited boys again seated themselves on the ground, and waited long and impatiently for the trapper's return. The hours slowly wore away, and, finally, the sun went down, but still no signs of the horsemen. It soon began to grow dark, and the boys were obliged to return to the wagon. Frank prepared supper that evening, but their appetites must have gone off with the gray mustang, for they ate

but little. They sat beside the fire until midnight, straining their ears to catch the first sounds of the trapper's return; but nothing but the occasional howl of a wolf broke the stillness; and, finally, growing tired of watching, they spread their blankets and went to sleep. At the first peep of day they were again stirring, and, after a hasty breakfast, they stationed themselves in the edge of the willows, to await the return of the horsemen. In about two hours their patience was rewarded by the discovery of several objects moving along the summit of a distant swell. As they approached, the boys recognized the trappers, and in half an hour they were within speaking distance. Could Frank believe his eyes? Was Dick really riding the gray king? It was a horse that bore a strong resemblance to him, and Frank felt confident that the animal he had so much admired, was really his own. Nor was he deceived; for, as they came up, Dick exclaimed:

"Here we ar', youngsters. We 've got him, sure as shootin'. Easy thar," he continued, as the delighted boys walked slowly around him, admiring his fine points. "If you know any thing you 'll keep cl'ar of his heels. He aint very good natur'd.'

This was very evident; for the trapper had scarcely spoken before the mustang began to show his temper. He danced about in the most lively manner; first rearing up almost straight in the air, and then kicking with both hind feet. His plunges were furious and desperate, and the boys fully expected to see the trapper unseated. But the latter, although he had no saddle—that being a contrivance he despised—and only had his lasso twisted around the gray's lower jaw, for a bridle, kept the animal completely under his control, and rode him into the camp in triumph.

"The critter led us 'bout as long an' as lively a race as we ever run," said Dick, after the gray had been securely fastened to a tree. "An' it war only by accident that we ketched him. I don't reckon I am sayin' too much when I say that I never seed a hoss run faster nor hold out better nor he did—not even the black mustang. "We went 'round on the other side of the drove afore we started 'em, on purpose to make 'em run t'wards the mountains. That give you a good sight of somethin' you never seed afore, an' by it we gained on the gray when he turned. Wal, he kept ahead of us for ten or twelve miles, gainin

on us all the while, fur when he seed that we war arter him in 'arnest, the way he did climb over the prairy war a purty thing to look at—when, all to onct, we found ourselves in a prairy-dog's nest. The prairy, as far as a feller could see, war like a honey-comb. I 'spected every minit that my hoss would break through, an' at last he did. But the gray broke in fust—went down clean to the top of his legs, an' could n't git out. I war sartin we had him, an' war jest goin' to throw my lasso, when my hoss went in, an' kerchunk I went on the ground. But ole Bob war on hand, an' he ketched him. We told you, Frank, that we 'd put you on horseback ag'in, an' now that we 've done it, I do n't reckon you 'll lose this animal by campin' with Black Bill."

CHAPTER XVII.

How the Trapper got his Horse.

AFTER supper, the travelers seated themselves around the fire, and the trappers lighted their pipes. After smoking awhile in silence, old Bob said:

"As I have told you afore, youngsters, it aint always a easy job to lasso the king of a drove of wild hosses. The runnin' we done to-day arter the gray war n't nothin' to what we kalkerlated to do when we left here; an' if he had n't got into that prairy-dogs' nest, thar 's no knowin' how many miles he would a been from here by this time. When I war a youngster, I went to the Saskatchewan fur the fust time, with a party of six trappers—Dick's ole man war one of 'em—an', being keerless, like all young fellers, I soon made away with one of the

best hosses I ever owned. I run him clear blind arter a herd of buffaler. I soon got another, howsomever, but it war n't as good a one as I wanted; an' I begun to look around to find a critter that suited me. One day I come acrost a drove of wild hosses, an', arter foolin' round them fur awhile, I diskivered that they war led by a chestnut-colored critter—a purty feller—an' I made up my mind that he war just the one I wanted. I had never ketched a wild hoss then, an' I had heered enough about them to know that them kings ar' allers the best animals in the drove, an' that it takes a hoss as *is* a hoss to keep up with one of 'em. But I could throw the lasso tolible sharp, an' war jest 'bout that age when youngsters think they know more 'n any body else on 'arth; so I thought I could ketch him easy. Wal, I dodged round them till I got within 'bout half a mile of 'em, and then put out arter the king; but, human natur, how he did run! I follered him 'bout four mile, and then turned t'ward the camp, thinkin' that mebbe thar war a few things I did n't know nothin' at all 'bout. Some days arterward, I seed him ag'in; but he run away from me easy, an' I went back to the camp to be laughed at fur my

trouble. But I knowed that I should have plenty of chances to ketch him afore we started fur hum—we war to stay thar till spring—so I said nothin', but kept lookin' round, an' every time I seed the chestnut king, me an' him had a race.

"I got him at last—not in the way I expected, howsomever—an', to make the story plain, I must tell you what happened 'bout three year afore that.

"I war born on the banks of the Missouri River, 'bout twenty mile from whar St. Joseph now stands. It war thar my ole man fust larnt me how to handle a rifle an' ride a wild mustang. Thar war a fort 'bout a mile from our cabin, whar the ole man allers went to sell his furs. It war n't no ways safe thar, in them days, fur all that country b'longed to the Injuns, who war n't very friendly t'ward white settlers. But, whenever thar war any trouble, we had a safe place to go to, an' onct, when I war only twelve year ole, I stood 'side my ole man, in the fort, an' helped drive off atween four an' five hundred red-skins. I done so well that ole hunters an' trappers slapped me on the back, sayin' that I war a 'chip o' the ole block,' and that I'd be a better Injun-hunter nor my father some day. This pleased my ole man, an'

when the Injuns had gone, he took me on a trappin' expedition with him. Thar war four of us, an' we war gone all winter. I ketched my share of the furs, an' killed two grizzly bars, which war something for a chap of my years to brag on. Wal, we reached hum in the spring, an', arter I had stayed at our cabin two or three days, tellin' my mother big stories of what I had seed, an' what I had done, the ole man sent me down to the fort to trade off our spelter. I ought to say that on our way hum we had dodged a large party of Injuns that war on a scalpin' expedition. They had been off a fightin' with another tribe, an', havin' got thrashed, they war n't in very good humor. I war afraid they might take it into their heads to visit the country 'round the fort, an' massacree the settlers; but the ole man laughed at me, an' told me to go 'long 'bout my bisness, an' sell them furs. So, as I war sayin', I sot out fur the fort, an', while I war makin' a bargain with the trader, a trapper came in on a hoss that war a'most ready to drop, an' said that the Injuns war strikin' fur the fort. I do n't reckon that they intended to come afore night; but this trapper had got away from 'em, an', knowin that he would alarm the settlers,

the Injuns jest thought they would make a rush, an' massacree men, women, an' children, afore they could reach the fort.

"Wal, I did n't wait to hear no more; but, grabbin' up my we'pons, started fur hum arter the old folks. Purty quick I heered a firin' an' yellin', an' made up my mind that them as did n't reach the fort in less nor ten minits would be goners, sartin, fur the Injuns war comin', sure enough. A little further on I met my mother, who told me that the ole man an' a few more of the settlers war fightin' back the Injuns to give the women an' young ones time to git safe under kiver. My mother war a'most too ole to walk so fur, so I took her on my hoss, and carried her t'wards the fort, intendin' that as soon as I had seed her safe I would come back arter the ole man. But jest as I reached the fort, I heered a loud yellin' an' whoopin', an', lookin' back, I seed the settlers comin' out of the woods, with the Injuns clost behind 'em. Thar war, as nigh as I could guess, 'bout two hundred red-skins, an' not more 'n twenty white fellers; so, in course, thar war n't no 'arthly use to think of fightin' in cl'ar open ground. The settlers war comin' as fast as their hosses could

fetch 'em, an' the Injuns war clost arter 'em, intendin' to kill or captur' 'em all afore they could reach the fort. I seed the ole man among the settlers, an' made up my mind that he war safe, fur he rid a good hoss, when, all to onct, he dropped his rifle, throwed up his hands, an' fell from his saddle The settlers kept on; fur, in course, they could n't help him, an' the ole man tried to foller 'em; but I seed him pulled down an' tomahawked, 'bout two hundred yards from the fort, by a young Injun, whom, from his bar's claws, an' other fixins, I tuk to be a chief. My ole shootin' iron war good fur that distance, so I drawed up and blazed away. But my hand trembled, an' I seed that Injun make off with the ole man's scalp. That war a long time ago, youngsters; but I can see that varlet yet, an' hear the yell he give as he shook the scalp at us in the fort, an' ran back into the woods. Of them twenty men that war in the fight, 'bout a dozen rode safe into the fort. The others war massacreed afore our very eyes, an' we could n't help 'em.

"Wal, the Injuns stayed round in the edge of the tim'er fur 'bout two hours, yellin' an' firin' at us; but, knowin' that they could not take the fort—

fur they tried that twice—they all set up a yelp an' put off, burnin' every thing as they went. It war a sad day fur that settlement. Nigh every family war mournin' fur somebody; but I war wusser off nor any of 'em. My mother carried a heap of years on her shoulders, an' when she seed the ole man pulled down an' scalped, it gave her a shock she never got over. We buried them both nigh the fort, an' arter stayin' round fur a week or two, I sot out with a party of trappers fur our ole huntin' grounds on the Saskatchewan. I never forgot that young Injun, an' all I keered fur or thought 'bout, war to meet him. I jest knowed that I should find him ag'in some day, an' if I had met him among his tribe, with hundreds of his friends standin' round, I would have knowed him.

"Wal, as I war sayin', I sot out with this party of trappers, an' it war on the Saskatchewan that I fust diskivered this chestnut king that I had made up my mind to have. I follered him a'most all winter, an' the more I seed him run, the more I wanted to ketch him. I 'tended to my shar' of the trappin', but every chance I got I war arter them hosses. At last they put off somewhar, an' I never seed 'em ag'in. I could n't think what had

'come on 'em, but I knowed that they had gone clean out of the country, an' that I should have to look fur another hoss, an' give up all hopes of ketchin' the chestnut.

"When spring opened, an' it come good travelin', we held a council, an' settled it that we should start fur the fort to onct. We war in a hurry to get away, too, fur some of our fellers had seen Injun sign 'bout two miles from the camp; so, one mornin' we sot out to gather up our traps. I had 'bout five mile to go to reach my trappin' ground, so I rode off on a gallop. I went along mighty keerless, fur I didn't b'lieve what them fellers had said 'bout seein' Injun sign, but I soon larnt that ole trappers never get fooled 'bout sich things. I hadn't gone more 'n a mile from the camp, when, whizz! something whistled by my head, an' went chuck into a tree on the other side of me. It war an arrer, an' afore I could look round to see whar it come from, I heered a yell, an' the next minit a hoss popped out of the bushes, an' came t'wards me. An Injun war on his back, an' in one hand he carried a long spear, an' with the other he held his bow an' guided his hoss. As soon as he got cl'ar of the bushes,

he p'inted that spear straight at my breast, an' came at me, full jump. I war a youngster then. I had n't been in as many rough-an'-tumble fights with wild Injuns as I have been since, an' I would have give all the spelter I had trapped that winter if I had been safe in camp. These war the fust thoughts that went through my mind. But arter I had tuk jest one good look at the Injun an' his hoss, I would n't have been away from thar fur nothin'. The Injun war the young chief that had rubbed out my ole man, an' the hoss war the chestnut king—the very one I had been tryin' to ketch fur a'most a year. So, you see, I had two things to work fur. Fust, I had swore to have that Injun's scalp; next, I wanted that hoss; an' I made up my mind that I would n't leave that 'ar place till I had 'em both. The young chief war so clost to me that I did n't have time to shoot, so I sot still in my saddle, an' when I seed the p'int of the spear 'bout two foot from my breast, I stuck out my rifle an' turned the we'pon aside. Then, jest as the Injun war goin' by me, I ketched him by the scalp-lock, quicker nor lightnin', an' pulled him from his hoss. My own hoss war n't trained wuth a plug o' tobacker, an', skeered by

the fuss, an' the Injuns yellin', he give a jump, an the fust thing I knowed, me an' the young chief war rollin' on the ground together. I 've had one or two wild savages by the top-knot since then, but I never got hold of a chap of his size that war so strong an' wiry. When I fust ketched him, I allowed to rub him out easy, fur I war purty good on a rough-an'-tumble, an' it war n't every body that could take my measure on the ground; but when I ketched that Injun, I found that I had come acrost a varmint. We fell side by side, I all the while hangin' on to his har; but afore I could think whar I war, or what a doin', I found the young chief on top of me; an', both his hands bein' free, he commenced feelin' fur his knife. In course I could n't allow that, so I ketched one of his arms, which he twisted out of my grasp, as easy as though I had no strength at all. I tried this two or three times, but findin' that I could n't hold him, I fastened on his belt which held the knife, an', with one jerk, tore it loose, an' flung it over my head. The Injun, findin' that his we'pon war gone, whooped an' yelled wusser nor ever. We war on even terms now, fur my knife war under me, an' neither of us could git at it. Then I began tryin' to git

him off me; but it war no use, an' the Injun findin' that I breathed hard, held still an' quiet, hopin' that I would soon tire myself out, an' then he would have no trouble in gittin' away from me. But I war layin' my plans all this while, an', watchin' the Injun clost, I ketched him off his guard, an' went to work in 'arnest. By the way that chap kicked an' yelled, I guess he thought I had only been foolin' with him afore, an' the way he did fight war n't a funny thing fur me to think of jest then. But it war no use. I thrashed around till I got hold of my knife, an', in a minit arter that, the young chief had give his last yell. Arter bein' sartin that he was done fur, I jumped up an' run t'wards the mustang, which had stood a little way off watchin' the fight, as though he war wonderin' who would come out at the top of the heap. I ketched him easy, an' arter takin' the young Injun's top-knot, I picked up his we'pons—here 's one of 'em, youngsters."

As the trapper spoke, he drew his hatchet from his belt and handed it to Archie, who sat nearest him. The boys remembered that the first time they met old Bob, they had noticed that his hatchet was different from any they had ever seen. The

blade was long and narrow, and as keen as a razor. The back part of the hatchet was hollow, as was also the handle, and thus the weapon could be made to answer the purpose of a pipe. The handle was also ingeniously carved, but was so worn by long and constant usage, that the figures upon it could not be distinguished. The travelers had often noticed that the old trapper was very particular about his "tomahawk," as he invariably called it; but now that they knew its history, they did not wonder that he considered it worth preserving. When the boys had examined the weapon to their satisfaction, they returned it to old Bob, who continued:

"Wal, arter I had tuk the young chief's scalp an' we'pons, (I had his knife, too, but I lost that in the Missouri River by bein' upset in a canoe,) I jumped on my new hoss, and rode t'wards the camp, leavin' my ole mustang to go where he pleased. When I reached our fellers, I found 'em all busy packin' up. They had diskivered signs of a large party of Injuns, an' they said that the sooner we got away from thar the better it would be fur us. We traveled all that night an' all the next day, an' got safe off. I had the laugh on my side

then, fur 'em fellers all said I could n't never put a bridle on the chestnut king; an' when I told 'em my story 'bout the young chief, you ought to seed them open their eyes. I had n't been fooled 'bout the good pints of that ar' hoss, fur he war a critter that suited me exactly. He carried me safe through many a fight with grizzly bars an' Injuns; but, finally, I lost him but a few miles from whar I fust seed him—on the Saskatchewan. I never trapped on that river yet without losin' somethin'. I have lost two chums thar; throwed away four or five winter's work—or jest the same as throwed it away, fur all my furs war captur'd by the Injuns, an' thar I lost this hoss."

CHAPTER XVIII.

Old Bob's Adventure.

THE old trapper paused for a moment to refill his pipe, and then continued—

"I went out as usual with a party of trappers, fur in them days it war n't no way safe fur a feller to go thar alone. We war a'most sartin to be chased by the Injuns, but them as got away with a hul skin, allers went back as soon as they could make up a comp'ny, fur it war thar the best trappin' war to be found.

"If all the red-skins we have rubbed out thar could come to life ag'in, I reckon thar would be lots of 'em, an' if all our poor fellers who have had thar har raised on the plains of that same river, could come back, you'd see a heap of fine trappers. An' if me an' Dick could have all the furs we have lost thar, I'll allow it would keep us in

pipes an' tobacker fur a year or two. In them days, a feller could git a good rifle fur a beaver or otter skin, an' a fust rate hoss fur two or three mink skins. Our furs war the only thing we had to depend on to buy us a new outfit; so when we lost all our winter's work, it war n't a thing to laugh at.

"Wal, as I war sayin', I went out with this party of fellers, an', as usual, not the least bit of Injun sign did we see durin' the winter. As a gen'ral thing the red-skins do n't run 'round much in cold weather—leastways, they do n't go fur from their camps; but by the time the snow is off the ground, they ar' well-nigh out of grub, an' have to start out on their huntin' expeditions. The Saskatchewan war a good place fur them to come to, fur thar war plenty of game; but the country war n't big enough for them an' us; so when they begun comin' in, it war high time fur us to be goin' out. Thar war five of us in the party, an' as every man knowed his own bisness, by the time spring come we had as much spelter as four hosses could pack away. When the snow commenced goin' off, we kept a good lookout fur Injuns—fur the trappin' war so fine we did n't want to leave so long as it

war safe to stay—an', one mornin', as I war comin' in from tendin' to my traps, I seed whar two Injuns had crossed the creek. That war enough fur me, so I put for the camp, but did n't find nobody thar. The fellers war all out tendin' to their bisness; an', in course, I war n't goin' away without 'em; so I packed up my spelter ready fur the start, and while waitin' fur 'em, kept sharp watch on all sides fur Injuns. 'Bout noon I heered a hoss comin', an', in a few minits, up rid one of our fellers with his huntin' shirt all bloody. As soon as I seed him, I knowed that the game war up.

"'Bob!' says he, 'Get away from here to onct. Bill Coffee is done fur (that war his chum), an' you can see how nigh they come to rubbin' me out too. Some varlet sent an arrer clean through my arm. Hand me my pack o' furs, and let 's be off to onct, I tell you.'

"This man—Bill Simons his name war—war the oldest an' bravest man in our comp'ny, an' he war our leader. Although I did n't like the idee of leavin' them fellers out thar in the woods with them Injuns—fur every one of 'em had done me a kindness—I knowed I could n't do them no good by stayin'; fur, when Bill Simons deserted his own

brother, thar war n't no use of any body's tryin' to help him. So I handed Bill his furs, grabbed up my own, jumped on my hoss, an' we started. It war no light load them hosses had to carry, fur our spelter war a'most as heavy as we war. But we could n't think of leavin' 'em behind without makin' one effort to save 'em, fur we had worked hard fur 'em, an' did n't want 'em to fall into the hands of them lazy Injuns. As we rid along, we made up our minds that we would stick together as long as we could, an' that we would n't drop our furs as long as we seed the least chance of escapin' with 'em. But if we had knowed any thing, we would have throwed away them packs to onct, fur hangin' on to 'em so long was jest the very thing that got us ketched. We run our hosses with them heavy loads, till they war clean done out; an' when the Injuns got arter us, they war a'most ready to drop. Wal, as I war sayin', we rid along fur 'bout two mile, keepin' a good lookout on all sides fur Injuns, an', finally, we seed 'em behind us. Thar war 'bout twenty of 'em, an' as soon as I sot eyes on 'em, I somehow knowed that we war ketched.

"'Bob,' said Bill, turnin' to me, 'our scalps ar'

wuth more nor this spelter. It is time to run in 'arnest now.'

"He throwed down his pack, as he spoke, an' then his hoss went faster. But I, bein' young an' foolish, did n't like the idee of losin' my winter's work; so I held on to my pack, till, findin' that Bill war leavin' me behind, I throwed it away Thar war our eight months' wages gone. We had worked hard an' froze among the snows of the mountains fur nothin'. But we had n't gone fur afore we diskivered that we had oughter throwed 'em away long ago. Both our hosses run as though they had traveled all day, an' it war plain as bar's ears that they could n't go much further. Every time we looked back we seed that the Injuns war gainin' on us fast, an' the way they yelled told us that they, too, knowed that they would soon have us. I looked t'wards Bill, an' although I could read in his face that he knowed we war ketched, he did n't seem the least bit skeary. He had been in jest such scrapes afore. He had often been a pris'ner, but he war strong as a hoss, could run like a skeered deer, an' had allers succeeded in gittin' away from the Injuns at last. I, howsomever, had never been in the hands of the red-skins,

but I knowed, from the stories I had often heered, that they did n't treat a feller very kind, an' this set me to thinkin'. The Injuns knowed Bill, an' would n't they know me too? The young chief I had rubbed out b'longed to that same tribe, an' would n't his friends 'member the hoss, an' the knife, an' tomahawk I carried in my belt? I could throw the we'pons away, an', arter thinkin' a leetle, I did. I unbuckled my belt, an', jest as we went over a swell out of sight of the Injuns, I dropped knife, tomahawk, an' all, hopin' that the red-skins would never find 'em; fur I knowed that if they thought I had ever rubbed out any of the tribe, I would ketch the wust kind of punishment.

"Wal, all this while the Injuns had been gainin' on us, fur, the further we went, the slower our hosses run, an' all the whippin' an' poundin' we could do, did n't make them go no faster. They war well-nigh tuckered out. Purty quick I see Bill turn in his saddle an' draw up his ole shootin' iron. He war bound to die game. I watched the shot, an' could n't help givin' a yell when I seed one of the varlets drop from his hoss. The Injuns had all this while been ridin' clost together; but findin' that we war goin to begin shootin', they

scattered, an' throwed themselves flat on their hosses backs, so that we could n't hit 'em. But we war sartin of our game, no matter how small a mark we had to shoot at, an' when I fired, I seed an Injun an' his hoss come to the ground together. By this time, Bill war ready ag'in, an' down come another Injun.

"If our hosses had only been fresh, we could have picked off the last one of 'em afore they could have ketched us. But the varlets kept gainin' all the time, an' purty quick they got nigh enough to use their we'pons, an' the way the arrers whistled 'bout our heads war n't pleasant, now I tell you. But we kept shootin' at 'em as fast as we could load up, bringin' down an Injun at every pop—till some chap sent his arrer into my hoss's side—an' the next minit I war sprawlin' on the ground. Bill kept on, but he had n't gone fur afore he got an arrer through his neck, which brought him from his saddle, dead. I jest seed this as I war tryin' to get up; fur my hoss had fell on my leg, an' war holdin' me down. Jest arter Bill fell, the Injuns come up an' I war a pris'ner. I could n't tell you how I felt, youngsters I had heered enough to know that much

depended on my showin' a bold front; but it takes a man of mighty strong nerve to look a dozen yellin', scowlin' Injuns in the face, without onct flinchin'. Howsomever, I kept a leetle courage 'bout me, I guess, fur when one chap jumped, an' drawed his bow with an arrer p'inted straight at my breast, I looked him in the eye without winkin'; an' when another ketched me by the har, an' lifted his tomahawk as if he had a good notion to make an end of me to onct, I stood as still an' quiet as though I did n't see him. Arter this had been goin' on fur a while, the Injuns seemed to grow tired of it, fur my hands war bound behind my back, an' one feller fetched up Bill's hoss, an' war goin' to put me on him, when the critter, bein' clean tired out, give a grunt an' lay right down on the prairy. The Injuns seemed to think the hoss war no 'count, fur they turned him loose, an' I war lifted on to a mustang behind one of the savages. I did n't think much of this at the time, but I arterward had reason to be glad that the varlets had left Bill's hoss out thar on the prairy.

"It war 'bout five mile to the place whar the Injuns had made their camp, an' while on the way thar I war n't bothered at all, fur they seed that I

war n't skeered easy. When we reached the village—which must have had nigh two hundred Injuns in it—I found that I war n't the only pris'ner, fur thar war Pete Simons, Bill's brother, tied to a post in the middle of the camp, an' he war surrounded by men, women, and young uns, who war beatin' him with sticks, an' tormentin' him every way they knowed how; but findin' that they could n't make Pete show fear—fur that war something he did n't have in him—they left him, when I came up, and pitched into me. I did n't mind 'em much, howsomever, although I *did* wince jest the least bit when one feller struck at me with his tomahawk, and jest grazed my face; but they did n't see it; an' purty quick one big feller ketched me by the har, an', arter draggin' me up to the post, tied me with my back to Pete's. It then wanted 'bout three hours of sundown, an' the Injuns, arter holdin' a leetle council, made up their minds to have some fun; so they untied me an' Pete, an' led us out on the prairy 'bout three or four hundred yards, an' thar left us. We looked back an' seed the Injuns all drawed up in a line, with their we'pons in their hands, an' knowed that the varlets had give us a chance to run for our lives. In course

they did n't mean fur us to git away, but they wanted the fun of seein' us run, never dreamin' but some of their fleet braves would ketch us afore we had gone fur. I never looked fur 'em to give us sich a chance fur life as that, an' I made up my mind that I would learn 'em to think twice afore they give a white trapper the free use of his legs ag'in. I a'most knowed I war safe, but I felt shaky 'bout Peter, fur the Injuns had shot him with two arrers afore they ketched him, an' he war hurt bad. I did n't think he could run far—nor he did n't, neither; fur when we shook hands an' wished each other good luck, he said to me, 'Bob, I wish I had my rifle.' He meant by that, if he had his ole shootin' iron in his hands, he would n't die alone; he would have fit the Injuns as long as he could stand. Wal, as I war sayin', we shook hands an' bid each other good-by, an' jest then I heered a yell. I jumped like a flash of lightnin', an' made t'wards a little belt of tim'er which I could see, 'bout two miles acrost the prairy. I war runnin' fur my life, an' I reckon I made the best time I knowed how. I soon left poor Pete behind, an', when I had gone about a mile, I heered a yell, that told me as plain as words, that he had been ketched.

I never stopped to look back, but kept straight ahead, an' in a few minits more I war in the woods. The yellin' of the Injuns had been growin' louder an' louder, so I knowed that they were gainin' on me, an' that if I kept on they would soon ketch me; so, as soon as I found myself fair in the tim'er, I turned square off to the right, an' takin' to every log I could find, so as to leave as leetle trail as possible fur them to foller, I ran 'bout a hundred yards further, an' then dived into a thick clump of bushes, whar I hid myself in the leaves an' brush. I had kinder bothered the varlets, for a leetle while arter, they came into the woods, an' went on through, as if they thought I had kept on t'wards the prairy. But I knowed that they would n't be fooled long; an' when I heered by their yellin' that they had left the woods, I crawled out of the bushes to look up a better hidin'-place Arter listenin' an' lookin', to be sartin that thar war no Injuns 'round, I ag'in broke into a run, an' finally found a holler log at the bottom of a gully, whar I thought I had better stop; so I crawled into the log, an' jest then I heered the Injuns coming back. They knowed that I war hid somewhar in the tim'er, an' they all scattered through the woods,

hopin' to find me afore it 'come dark—yellin' all the while, as though they didn't feel very good-natured 'bout bein' fooled that ar' way. I knowed that they couldn't foller my trail easy, but thar war so many of 'em, that I war afraid somebody might happen to stumble on my hidin'-place. But they didn't; an' arter awhile it 'come dark, an' the varlets had to give up the search. I waited till every thing war still, an' then crawled out of my log, and struck fur the prairy. I warn't green enough to b'lieve that they war all gone, fur I knowed that thar war Injuns layin' 'round in them woods watchin' an' waitin' fur me. In course I didn't want to come acrost none of 'em, fur I had no we'pon, and I would have been ketched sartin; so I war mighty keerful; an' I b'lieve I war two hours goin' through the hundred yards of woods that lay atween me an' the prairy. When I reached the edge of the tim'er, I broke into a run. If thar war any Injuns 'round, they couldn't see me, fur the night war dark; an' they couldn't hear me, neither, fur my moccasins didn't make no noise in the grass. I kept on, at a steady gait, fur 'bout two hours, an' finally reached the place whar I war captur'd. Arter a leetle lookin' and

feelin', I found my belt and we'pons. I felt a heap better then, fur I had something to defend myself with; but still I didn't feel like laughin', fur I war afoot, an', havin' no rifle, I couldn't think how I war to git grub to eat. But I war better off nor while I war a pris'ner 'mong the Injuns; so I knowed I hadn't oughter complain. Arter takin' one look at poor Bill, whom the Injuns, arter havin' scalped, had left whar he had fallen, an' promisin' that every time I seed a Blackfoot Injun I would think of him, I ag'in sot out. Arter I had gone 'bout half a mile further, the moon riz, an', as I war running along, I seed something ahead of me. I stopped to onct, fur I didn't know but it might be a Injun; but another look showed me it war a hoss. He war feedin' when he fust seed me, but, when he heered me comin', he looked up, an' give a leetle whinny that made me feel like hollerin'. It war Bill Simons's hoss. How glad I war to see him! An' he must a been glad to see me, too, fur he let me ketch him; an' when I got on his back, I didn't keer, jest then, fur all the Injuns on the plains. The critter had had a good rest, an', when I spoke to him, he started off just as lively as though he war good fur

a hundred mile. Wal, I rid all that night, an', 'arly tne next mornin', I found myself nigh a patch of woods whar we allers made our camp when goin' to an' from the Saskatchewan, an' I thought I would stop thar and git a leetle rest, fur I war tired an' hungry. So I rid through the woods, an', when I come in sight o' our ole campin' ground, I seed something that made me feel like hollerin' ag'in; an' I *did* holler; fur thar war two of our comp'ny—the only ones that 'scaped 'sides me—jest gettin' ready to start off. They stopped when they seed me—an', youngsters, you may be sartin that we war glad to meet each other ag'in. One of 'em war Bill Coffee, who I thought war dead. He war bad hurt, but he got off without losin' his har, an' he felt mighty jolly over it. Arter they had told me 'bout their fight with the Injuns—an' they jest *did* get away, an' that war all—I told 'em 'bout Bill Simons bein' killed, and how me an' Pete had run a race with the varlets, an' we all swore that the Blackfeet wouldn't make nothin' by rubbin' out them two fellers. I stayed thar long enough to rest a little an' eat a piece of meat that one of 'em give me, an' then we all sot out fur the fort, which

we reached all right. We laid 'round fur 'bout a month, an' then—would you b'lieve it?—we three fellers made up another comp'ny, an' put fur the Saskatchewan ag'in. None of us ever forgot our promise, an' every time we drawed a bead on a Blackfoot, we thought of Bill an' Pete Simons."

CHAPTER XIX.

Homeward Bound.

THE travelers remained at the "ole bar's hole" three weeks, instead of one, as they had at first intended. Game of every description was plenty; there were no Indians to trouble them; in short, they were leading a life that exactly suited the boys, who were in no hurry to resume their journey, which was becoming tiresome to them. Besides, their supply of bacon was exhausted, and the trappers undertook to replenish the commissary. This they did by "jerking" the meat of the buffaloes that had been killed during the hunt in which Frank had taken his involuntary ride. They cut the meat into thin strips, and hung it upon frames to dry—the sun and the pure atmosphere of the prairie did the rest. The meat was thoroughly cured without

smoke or salt, and although the boys did not relish it as well as the bacon, they still found it very palatable. To Dick, it was like meeting with an old friend. He had always been accustomed to jerked Buffalo meat, and he ate great quantities of it, to the exclusion of corn-bread and coffee, of which he had become very fond.

In addition to this, the gray mustang demanded a large share of their attention. He was very unruly, extremely vicious, and attempted to use his teeth or heels upon every thing that approached him. But these actions did not in the least intimidate Dick, who was a most excellent horseman; and, after several rides over the prairie, coupled with the most severe treatment, he succeeded in subduing the gray, which was turned over to his young master, with the assurance that he was "a hoss as no sich ole buffaler hunter as Sleepy Sam could run away from."

This declaration was instantly resisted by Archie, who forthwith challenged Frank to a race; but it was not until the latter had fully satisfied himself that the mustang was completely conquered that he accepted the proposition. When he had been robbed of his horse, Frank had lost some

thing that could not again be supplied, and that was his saddle. As for a bridle, he soon found that the trapper's lasso twisted about the gray's lower jaw, answered admirably; but it was a long time before he could bring himself to believe that his blanket could be made to do duty both as saddle and bed. After a week's practice, however, he began to feel more at home on his new horse; and, one morning, as he rode out with his cousin, he informed him that he was prepared for the race. Archie, always ready, at once put Sleepy Sam at the top of his speed; but the gray king had lost none of his lightness of foot during his captivity, and before they had gone fifty yards he had carried Frank far ahead. Race after race came off that day, and each time Sleepy Sam was sadly beaten. Archie was compelled to acknowledge the gray's superiority, and declared that he "would n't mind camping with Black Bill himself if he could be certain of no worse treatment than Frank had received, and could gain as good a horse as the gray king by the operation.'

The mustang having been thoroughly broken to saddle, and the travelers supplied with meat, there was nothing now to detain them at the cave. So,

one morning Dick harnessed his mules, and they prepared to resume their journey. Before starting, however, the boys explored the "ole bar's hole" for the twentieth time, and as long as they remained in sight, they turned to take a long, lingering look at the place which was now associated with many exciting adventures.

Instead of traveling back to the road the train had taken, the trapper led them southward, and, after a long and tedious journey through the mountains, they reached Bridger's Pass, and a few days afterward they arrived at a fort of the same name. They camped there one night, and then turned their faces toward Salt Lake City, which they reached in safety. Mr. Winters led the way to a hotel, where an excellent dinner was served up for them. After passing more than two months in the saddle, subsisting upon the plainest food, it is no wonder that the boys were glad to find themselves seated at a table once more. Fresh meat and vegetables of all kinds disappeared before their attacks, and they finally stopped because they were ashamed to eat more. After dinner, being informed by their uncle that they would remain in the city until the following day, in order to give the trappers

time to lay in a fresh supply of provisions, the boys started out to see the sights. Evidences of prosperity met their eyes on every side. Some of the buildings were elegant, the streets broad and clean, and filled with vehicles. Wagon trains were constantly coming and going, and the principal business seemed to be to supply these with provisions. Archie thought it must be a splendid place to live in, so near good hunting grounds; but he could not help glancing pityingly toward a youth about his own age, whom they met on the street, and wondering "how many mothers that poor fellow had to boss him around."

When it began to grow dark they returned to their hotel, where they retired early. They thought they could enjoy a good night's rest in a comfortable bed, but their expectations were not realized. They could not go to sleep. First, they thought the quilts were too heavy, and they kicked them off on the floor. Then the mattress was too soft—they could scarcely breathe—and after rolling and tossing for half the night, they spread the quilts on the floor, and there slept soundly until morning.

Their journey through Utah and Nevada into California, was accomplished without incident

worthy of note. The boys hunted a little now and then, in company with the trappers; raced their horses every day, and Archie found opportunities to make a collection of relics, that fully reconciled him to the loss of those of which Frank had been robbed the night he camped with the outlaw. There was no lack of fun and excitement, but they had been so long in the saddle that they began to grow weary of their journey, and heartily wished themselves at the end of it.

In due time they arrived at Sacramento, where was located a large business house in which Mr. Winters was interested. They secured rooms at a hotel, and the next morning found the boys fresh and eager for the sights of the city. They met uncle James and the trappers at the breakfast table, and the former proceeded to unfold his programme.

"We shall probably remain in Sacramento two or three weeks," said he, "or, at least until I can settle up a few important business matters, and then we'll set out again. Our life in the saddle is over for the present. When we resume our journey we shall travel by stage and steamer."

"Wal—no, I reckon not," said Dick, quickly,

"leastways not me an' my chum, here. I'd a heap sooner foot it."

"Why, there 's no danger," said Archie

"Now, you need n't talk, little 'un," replied the trapper, "'cause it won't do no arthly good, whatsomever. We jest aint a goin' to do it."

"Well, then," said Mr. Winters, "suppose you and Bob take the boys' horses and make the journey by land. Our home for the next six or eight months," he added, turning to his nephews, "will be in the southern part of California, sixty miles from San Diego. Dick and Bob have expressed a desire to remain with us until we return to the States, and so I have hired them."

"What for?" asked Frank. "To hunt and trap for you?"

"No, to take care of cattle."

"An' to keep an eye on you youngsters," chimed in old Bob. "You 'll be fightin' grizzly bars, an gettin' stampeded with buffaler if you aint watched mighty close."

"But suppose Dick can't find his way to San Diego?" said Archie.

"You need n't be oneasy," laughed the trapper. "Mebbe you 'd think it queer if I should tell you

that me an' ole Bill Lawson have hunted over near every mile of this country. If you live to get to San Diego—which I don't much look fur, seein' that you are goin' to travel on one of them steamboats—you 'll find me an' Bob waitin' fur you."

This plan having been decided upon, the trappers prepared to start immediately. They did not feel at home in the city, and seemed impatient to get out of it. Dick took leave of the boys as though he never expected to see them again, and then mounted Frank's horse and galloped down the street, leading sleepy Sam by the bridle.

Frank and Archie remained in Sacramento nearly three weeks. They enjoyed themselves in various ways, but were not sorry when uncle James told them that he was ready to resume the journey. They went by stage to Benecia, and thence by boat to San Francisco. There they remained a few days, to explore the city, and then took passage on board a mail steamer for San Diego. They reached their destination after a pleasant voyage, and almost the first man they saw when they stepped upon the wharf, was Dick Lewis, who seemed immensely relieved to find that they had accomplished their journey in safety.

The party spent the night at the hotel, and the next morning, bright and early, set out on horse back for Mr. Winters' ranche, where they arrived about supper time. Here the boys again found themselves surrounded by new scenes. In less than half an hour they had made a thorough examination of their new quarters, and come to the conclusion that during the next six months they were doomed to lead a very dull life.

"We shall see no fun here," said Archie, as he and his cousin went into the room that had been assigned to them, to get ready for supper. "Dick and Bob will be kept busy attending to the stock; there are no boys in the country; the nearest house is four miles distant; it is so hot one can scarcely stir out of doors, and we can do nothing but sit and mope in the house."

These were Archie's first impressions. Before he had been long on the ranche, he discovered that life in California was not so dull and uneventful as he had imagined it to be. He had adventures, and more than he wanted; and what they were shall be told in FRANK AMONG THE RANCHEROS.

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WHEN I was sixteen years old I belonged to a composition class. It was our custom to go on the recitation seat every day with clean slates, and we were allowed ten minutes to write seventy words on any subject the teacher thought suited to our capacity. One day he gave out "What a Man Would See if He Went to Greenland." My heart was in the matter, and before the ten minutes were up I had one side of my slate filled. The teacher listened to the reading of our compositions, and when they were all over he simply said: "Some of you will make your living by writing one of these days." That gave me something to ponder upon. I did not say so out loud, but I knew that my composition was as good as the best of them. By the way, there was another thing that came in my way just then. I was reading at that time one of Mayne Reid's works which I had drawn from the library, and I pondered upon it as much as I did upon what the teacher said to me. In introducing Swartboy to his readers he made use of this expression: "No visible change was observable in Swartboy's countenance." Now, it occurred to me that if a man of his education could make such a blunder as that and still write a book, I ought to be able to do it, too. I went home that very day and began a story, "The Old Guide's Narrative," which was sent to the *New York Weekly*, and came back, respectfully declined. It was written on both sides of the sheets but I didn't know that this was against the rules. Nothing abashed, I began another, and receiving some instruction, from a friend of mine who was a clerk in a book store, I wrote it on only one side of the paper. But mind you, he didn't know what I was doing. Nobody knew it; but one

day, after a hard Saturday's work—the other boys had been out skating on the brick-pond—I shyly broached the subject to my mother. I felt the need of some sympathy. She listened in amazement, and then said: "Why, do you think you could write a book like that?" That settled the matter, and from that day no one knew what I was up to until I sent the first four volumes of Gunboat Series to my father. Was it work? Well, yes; it was hard work, but each week I had the satisfaction of seeing the manuscript grow until the "Young Naturalist" was all complete.

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Mr. Ellis began writing at an early age and his work was acceptable from the first. His parents removed to New Jersey while he was a boy and he was graduated from the State Normal School and became a member of the faculty while still in his teens. He was afterward principal of the Trenton High School, a trustee and then superintendent of schools. By that time his services as a writer had become so pronounced that he gave his entire attention to literature. He was an exceptionally successful teacher and wrote a number of text-books for schools, all of which met with high favor. For these and his historical productions, Princeton College conferred upon him the degree of Master of Arts.

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